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STEVE (THE DUDE) RUDE

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#78

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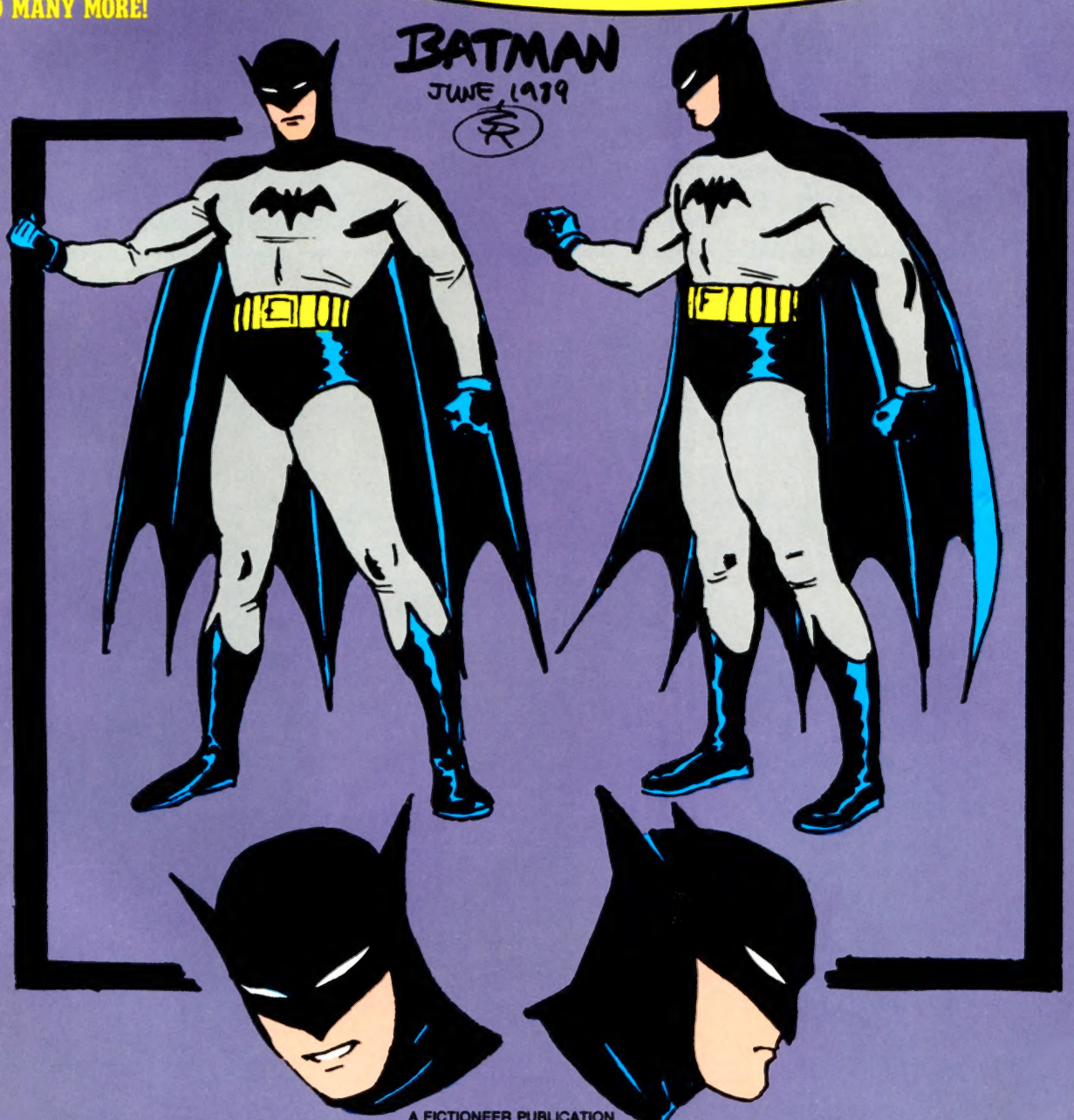

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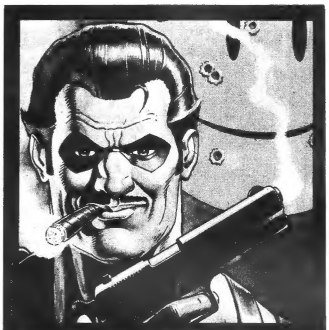

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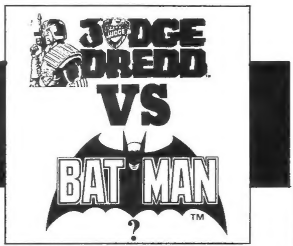

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UP FRONT

Way back when I was an editor at Marvel Comics, a decade and more ago, one of my least favorite duties was a mercifully short fill-in stint on GHOST RIDER. I did, however, try to use that position to advance the cause of comic art, at least on covers.

For years, I had remarked long and loud on the raw, exuberant look of **Ed Hannigan's** cover sketches, for MASTER OF KUNG FU and many another Marvel title of the time. Sketches which went unseen by the readers, having been replaced by finished covers refined and redrawn by other artists working from Ed's sketches. I often preferred the roughs to the slicked-down final cover images. Somehow, no matter how well-crafted, something was lost. The excitement. The raw edge.

For an issue of GHOST RIDER I was editing, Ed sketched a car driver looking into his rearview mirror to see Ghost Rider in hot pursuit. The excitement, the mood, the power was all in the rough execution. I wanted to use the sketch itself as the cover.

I was thwarted.

Years later, even Marvel has loosened up. Some of the **Bill Sienkiewicz** covers resemble nothing so much as those old **Hannigan** sketches of yore. Times have changed.

The cover of this issue of INTERVIEW features **Steve Rude's** original Batman model sheet for WORLD'S FINEST. I like the raw, primal version of **Rude's** Superman and Batman, which strips away the mannered veneer and takes the characters back to their origins. Steve tells me DC Comics asked him to tame his Batman down a bit to bring it more in line with the current image of the character, but interviewer **Paul Power** assures us the new WORLD'S FINEST still packs a punch.

I'm looking forward to this project so much — having once worked on WORLD'S FINEST myself and wishing it could have had this look — that I won't even begrudge "The Dude" having usurped my old Marvel moniker.

Dave Kraft

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"It's a contrast in character between a dark,

As I sit here on a sunny California day, having just interviewed NEXUS artist Steve Rude, there's a couple of things I'd like to mention about Steve — he's an intense dude! And a real fair-dinkum bloke with a sense of humor who helped me finish off a bottle of Spumante.

At certain points in the interview we got a little loose and let fly, so this should be a fun bit for you to get into. Bear in mind, we were just two dudes having a good time on a Saturday night. Now, sit back, you'd are going to get a taste of what makes NEXUS (in part Mike Baron) and Steve Rude tick! Cheers . . .

PAUL POWER: *I'm talking with Steve Rude, artist on NEXUS, SPACE GHOST the MR. MIRACLE SPECIAL and . . . what else are you working on, Steve?*

STEVE RUDE: What else am I going to be working on. The only plans at present are to do a project for DC, a Superman and Batman thing.

PAUL: *Will you be writing this, or co-writing?*

STEVE: I'll just be drawing it and painting the covers. It'll be three issues long, 48 pages each — it's going to be a lot of work. Once I get done with that, then it's back to NEXUS. The idea there is to establish myself again with the readership, who may have forgotten me by that time. And after NEXUS we go to SPACE GHOST II.

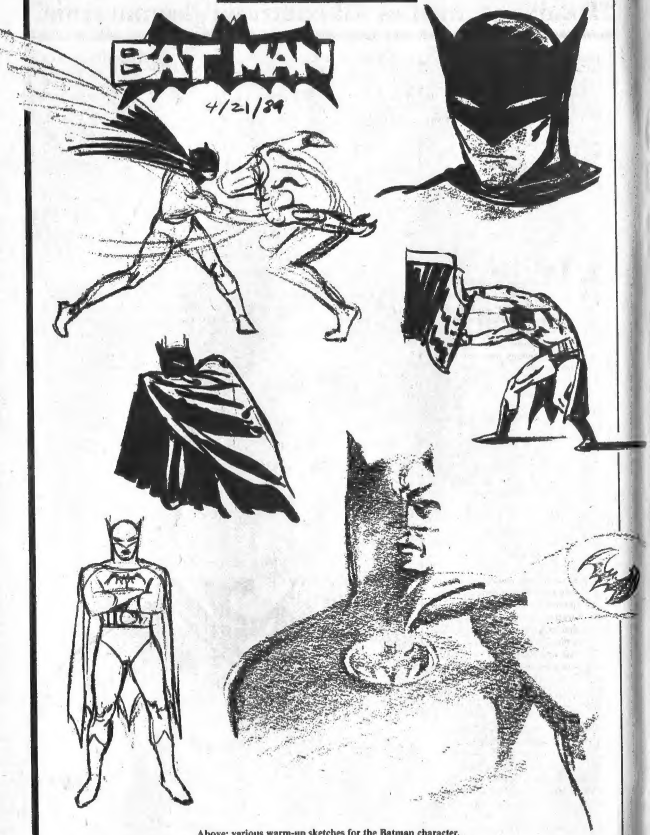
PAUL: *Do you think you'll get to that by the end of the year?*

STEVE: *(Laughter.)* I'm sure that it won't be started until at least January. If I say January, in reality it seems to come about a few months after I think it's

STEVE RUDE

Superman, Mr. Miracle, Darkseid, Newsboy Legion, Blue Beetle and The Batman ©1989 DC Comics, Inc. Thor, Fantastic Four, Silver Surfer, Captain America, Spider-Man, Black Panther, Hulk, Cyclops, Nick Fury, Dr. Doom, Sub-Mariner, The Thing, Human Torch and The Black Knight ©1989 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. Nexus ™ ©1989 Mike Baron & Steve Rude. Space Ghost ™ ©1989 Hanna-Barbera Prod., Inc. Elvira ™ ©1989 Queen Bee Productions, Inc.

moody guy and this All-American gleaming icon."



Above: various warm-up sketches for the Batman character.

"The original Joker — he's more scary than any other."

going to be started.

PAUL: *Now, with the Batman and Superman thing, can you tell us about the story at all?*

STEVE: Well, I can tell you a little. I just received the first two stories from **Dave Gibbons,** and I *know* it's going to be fun working with him. The guy has got a great attitude about everything. We spend half the time on the phone laughing, you know, over our similar thoughts and —

PAUL: *Wait a minute, he lives in England — who pays the bill?*

STEVE: *(Laughter.)* It depends on who calls. I wonder, I'll have to ask DC about that, yeah.

PAUL: *Yeah, it's a business call.*

STEVE: Yeah! I think they will pick up the tab on that. But the story . . . well, the *best* way to describe *any* story is to say it in a sentence; you can tell in a sentence if it's going to work or not. For this story it's simply a contrast in character between a dark, moody guy that hangs around in this filthy Gotman City, cleaning up the criminals like they were some kind of vermin, and this All-American gleaming icon who represents all of the things that are positive about the American experience.

PAUL: *Does it in any way take from Frank Miller's DARK KNIGHT, or what John Byrne has done with Superman?*

STEVE: I think there's going to be a few carry-overs.

PAUL: *Will the BATMAN film have any bearing on this WORLD'S FINEST?*

STEVE: Well, I haven't seen it yet. It will have a bearing on what I do if it turns out it's something that I like. But, from *my* point of view, from what *I* am going to have to do to make this book work, my gimmicks are I'm going to be returning the characters to what they originally were, and exploiting the contrast. The sources that I will be drawing from for Superman and Batman are the original sources of those characters, which I still think are *probably* the best versions.

PAUL: *Oh, nice. Are you going to try and do a true Steve Rude version of Joe Shuster and Bob Kane?*

STEVE: Yeah. Despite all of the years of development in these characters, I think the original concepts, the way those people *originally* did these characters, still has what's most exciting about them. It's hard for me to explain *what* that is. When I look at the original **Bob Kane** BATMANs, when I look at the original Joker — he's more scary than any other Joker I've seen ever —

PAUL: *Yeah.*

STEVE: Scary stuff. So, that's how I'm going to gear up this whole thing, just go back to the source; which feels good in my heart, to know that I'm doing that.

PAUL: *I'd like to see how you handle Superman. I feel that's truly the most powerful Superman, where he's really a strong guy, a strong man.*

STEVE: Yeah, **Shuster** gave it an incredible physical presence.

PAUL: *Will Dave Gibbons be doing any layouts on this?*

STEVE: None. He's described it very completely, though, taking all of his experience from working with **Alan Moore** and doing it himself now. The first script was about 100 damn pages long.

PAUL: *What did you think of that?*

STEVE: I'm gonna be in for a lot of readin' *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Will you be sending him roughs?*

STEVE: Well, I don't really *do* roughs. I do thumbnails, and from the thumbnails I enlarge them just by eyeing them out. I don't do full-size roughs that people can check out.

PAUL: *With him writing this script, has he expressed any desires that he may have wanted to draw this thing himself?*

STEVE: Well, I can probably speak for Dave: Of course he would. I mean, he has visualized this thing so *completely,* I think it would be something in the back of his mind that he would like to shoot for — he would like to see what *he* would do. Sure, he'd like to draw it for himself, and in a sense he already has. In his mind he has drawn the complete thing out, totally.

PAUL: *Is this, like, a WATCHMEN treatment, do you feel?*

STEVE: Yeah, yeah. It's not going to be that hard, though. It's going to be hard when it *has* to be, but it's also going to be

"Baron said, 'You know, if you did one issue of

kind of funny. **Gibbons'** great sense of humor is going to come through in his writing.

PAUL: *You know what might be nice—I'm just throwing this out, all right—it might be nice if Gibbons inked this.*

STEVE: Hm. God, I never thought about that. Yeah. That is really *interesting*. I'll have to ask about that.

PAUL: *I think it's good that you're working with Dave Gibbons.*

STEVE: Yeah, I have a good feeling about that. I like the fact mostly that he is an unconventional choice as a writer. I *love* how people react to that. "*What*, **Dave Gibbons** is writing, shouldn't he be drawing?" No, he's writing the damn thing.

PAUL: *How did that come about?*

STEVE: Originally, I walked into **Bruning's** office at DC and said, "You know, Rich, I'm moving to L.A., I've got to start making some bread here. I know that I'm going to be working with DC again eventually, so let's pick out a project that's going to make some bread." And then he . . . No, that was after I talked to **Baron.** It was **Baron** who came up to me and said, "You know, if you did one issue of THE PUNISHER, you could buy a new car." And I laughed it off, you know, foolishly. But then the move came up, so he said, "Well, let's do a SUPERMAN graphic novel; sales will go through the roof and you'll make tons of money."

As time went by things got shuffled around—I don't know how these things come about—and then **Dave Gibbons** was suggested as a writer, and I said I'd love to work with him. It's just one of those things where, you know, I've worked with **Baron** a million times, we're always going to be known for NEXUS, we'll work together in the future—but I loved the idea of working with somebody fresh and new just *because* it's fresh and new. It's not because it would be *better*, I just *like* that idea, it rings true to my feelings about doing the right things for my career and everything like that. **Dave Gibbons** sounded great, you know.

PAUL: *What other characters do you really want to draw?*

STEVE: The only characters that would be dear to my heart at Marvel were the ones that **Kirby** created, that's pretty much it. Likewise, I would want to do almost *anything* **Kirby** did over at DC. I would *not* want to do it on a regular basis; I think that would be *wrong* of me, to try to assume that responsibility, simply out of my respect for **Kirby.** But I know I would have a blast doing his

Rough layout for a double-page NEXUS spread by Steve.

THE PUNISHER, you could buy a new car."

Various practice sketches of Superman.

"The characters dear to my heart are those Kirby created."

Steve Rude teamed up with inker Mike Royer for the MISTER MIRACLE one-shot.

characters, and I think I could legitimately do them justice.

PAUL: *I found that your MR. MIRACLE SPECIAL for DC . . . Well, I have my opinion, but how did you feel about working on that?*

STEVE: I *loved* working on MR. MIRACLE. Thinking back, I remember feeling in my heart that I could really do a good job on MR. MIRACLE. I wanted to do a version that . . . if you were to take the essence of what **Kirby** did in that series, and subjugate my own style a little bit — because I *felt* that it should be done in a **Kirby** style — if I could do *that*, I would have a real winner. It was a good story and I felt great working with **Mike Royer.** MR. MIRACLE got us nothing but praise.

PAUL: *Yeah, it was great. The thing I liked about it was that it was drawn differently from how you draw NEXUS. I mean, I've always liked your work, but you got some of that Kirby bravado, like you put on a wider lens — you touch on the essence of Kirby while remaining true to your own style. It was a whole new side of Steve Rude.*

STEVE: Well, thanks, Paul. You know, I studied **Kirby** *extensively* before I took on MR. MIRACLE, and I really felt I understood the essence of what his style had. I broke it down into the human body in an extreme gesture with a bunch of black accent lines to indicate movement and form, so that's what I tried to do. I did feel I understood the essence of what made his style so dynamic. I didn't try to copy every little squiggle he put in, which is ridiculous.

PAUL: *You know, a lot of people who try to imitate or emulate Kirby, or just flat out swipe, get stuck on the technique of all of the little squiggles that he put in, and those sharp sort of jots between a biceps and forearm. They forget about the underlying mass and weight which Kirby* really *had.*

STEVE: Yes, he really had that.

PAUL: *And that's what you got. It was quite mind-blowing.*

"I understand what made Kirby's style so dynamic."

STEVE: Thanks. I had a little trouble with trying to get Mr. Miracle's face on model. **Kirby** has a *funny* way of doing proportions, which worked to make his people look handsome and his women beautiful, but when I tried to do it . . . I just didn't feel like I had that part of it down. I had to struggle and I didn't connect right.

PAUL: *The way that Kirby distorted things made it work. And there's differences in Kirby from 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 to today.*

STEVE: You're right. All it boils down to, Paul, is that I have to work harder on the faces. Someday I'm going to do the New Gods, and with all of the practice that I will have gotten under my belt in the meantime, I hope that I can take that on and make it work.

PAUL: *I heard that Kirby really liked your MR. MIRACLE.*

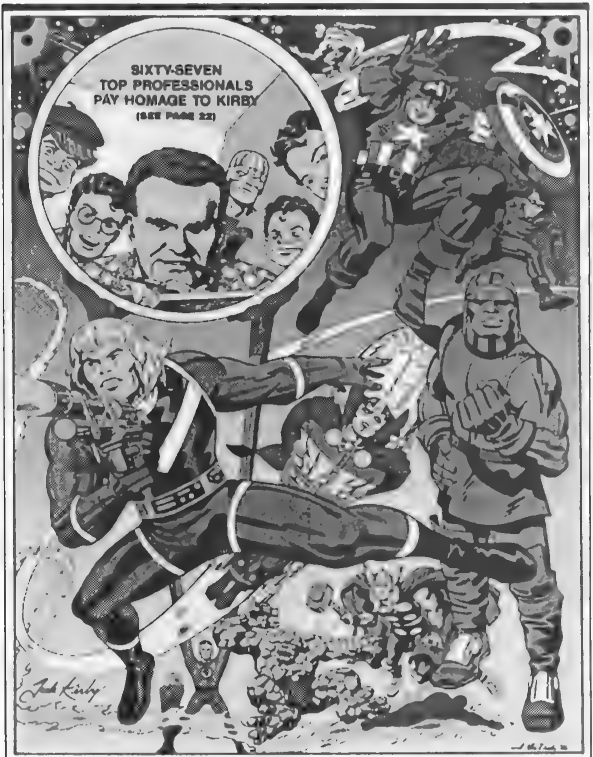
STEVE: He honestly did say that. In fact, I just talked to Roz yesterday and she said — not to insult the other artists, of course — she said that the only version that **Kirby** could stand to look at, of *any* of his characters ever handled by others, was *ours.*

PAUL: *Well, and Mark's script really had the Kirby flavor down. It was a nice team, you know.*

STEVE: It worked, Paul. We all felt like

Original pencils by Kirby (Mr. Miracle). From Disneyland Comic Convention Program, 1971.

"I take on different challenges. It's healthy for me."



A dream come true — for Steve, inking the work of Jack Kirby (AMAZING HEROES cover)

we did something that was a worthy tribute.

PAUL *Do you look forward to doing these other projects as a nice break from NEXUS? Doesn't NEXUS get tiresome?*

STEVE I wouldn't use the word "tiresome" but I feel like I'm doing a service to myself when I take on different challenges. It's healthy for me mentally

"I literally almost killed myself over the work."

and it's a good chance to kind of announce myself to people who for some reason, despite all of the acclaim that NEXUS has had, have never looked at a copy of NEXUS.

PAUL: *Have you ever come across burn-out in doing NEXUS?*

STEVE: I *have* encountered burn-out about four times in my career drawing NEXUS. The first time it happened it was devastating. Like any first-time occurrence, you're left not knowing how to deal with it, and it's really rough, man.

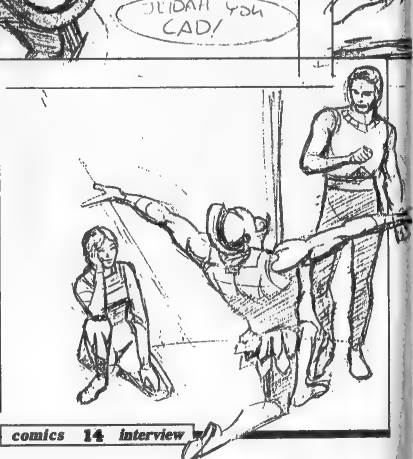
PAUL: *How do you feel when you hit burn-out? What goes through your head?*

STEVE: A tremendous feeling of guilt that I am unable to perform, that I'm letting people down.

PAUL: *So, what do you do, how do you handle it?*

STEVE: Well, the first time it happened I tried to communicate with people that I was having some terrible problem here that I couldn't quite put my finger on.

PAUL: *It is very scary, almost like a breakdown.*



"You're just a husk, a mental shell of a human being."

STEVE: Oh, it is. I think the best thing you can do to . . . I'll tell you, I solved it by realizing that I was breaking down because mentally I couldn't go on anymore. This is simply the *clinical* way of looking at it: There was something wrong; I had to listen to what my mind was telling me. Instead of feeling guilty and making it even worse upon myself, I had to look at what happened and not be so hard on myself.

I was so hard on myself back then that I literally almost killed myself over the work, and then the guilt that came on top of not being able to work. Having survived it, I look back and realize that it happened for a reason; and it wasn't a *bad* reason, I shouldn't feel bad for having had it happen to me.

PAUL: *Any advice here for other artists who go through this?*

STEVE: *(Pause.)* I'm at a loss to explain how to resolve it. Just take your mental health very seriously. We're so hard on ourselves . . . just be aware that these things are going to happen. **Baron** gave me some good advice, he says, "You are responsible for your mental health." And when that started to sink in, I started to cut the shit. I was burning out because I was working myself to death, and adding all of the pressures on top of it, the guilt and all of the other crap. I started to reverse it all.

PAUL: *To forgive yourself?*

STEVE: Yeah, forgive yourself. It's real hard for people that are horribly work-ethic orientated.

PAUL: *Burn-out can happen from whatever, from being prolific, from hitting deadline pressure — all of a sudden it hits and you just creatively do not have an idea, or you just don't feel like drawing, or the mind doesn't connect. The scary part about it with me, and maybe with you, is that you can't understand what's wrong with you.*

STEVE: Yeah. That first time . . . I'll tell you, it was so terrible I must have blotted it out, I can't even *remember* what the hell happened. But I remember that the first time it happened it was *horrible!* It happened when I had the flu and I was getting more and more behind. There was actually a time . . . Well, what happens is you feel so bad that you tend to want to eat yourself up even more so, and then what you're left with is you're just a husk, a mental shell of a human being.

The best thing I can tell anyone that ever goes through it is to take it very seriously and, I mean this, just fucking stop! Cut the shit and just stop, you know. Realize that you are a human being who has gone beyond your limit, and you just have to stop it. And that is probably more hard than anything else, is to ease up on yourself and just stop. I've had to learn a lot about my mental health after all of these years of doing what I've done, and I will never again endanger my mental health for the sake of work.

PAUL: *You've got to give yourself a break?*

STEVE: Yeah. With all of the other great things that life has to offer, you can still get your damn work done. I can't answer the question for anybody but me; all I can say is: If that burn-out hits you, you should seriously reexamine your priorities in life. I lived to make those damn deadlines, and I'll never do that again — never *ever* do that again! I have to have a very necessary break. I will never subject my mental health to that kind of rigorous ordeal again. It's foolish, it's quite absurd. It's no way to live a life. I'm not going to see my youth slip by, man.

PAUL: *Good for you. Now you're in California — you shouldn't!*

STEVE: California, the best move I could've made!

PAUL: *But those earthquakes are a bit of a rattle.*

STEVE: Lead me to the big one with the killer waves — *Kowabunga! (Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Let's go on to the fun side of comics. What about the conventions?*

STEVE: Yeah!

PAUL: *Well, one of the better moments at a convention was when you won the Russ Manning Award, I thought. Some other guys get their awards, and they're very nice and happy to receive them, but when you got the Russ Manning Award — and I think you were the first recipient of it —*

STEVE: **Dave Stevens** was the first recipient.

PAUL: *Sorry, Dave — and you were second, then. You were very . . . it was like the comics Academy Awards. How did you feel that night?*

STEVE: God, I really . . . I'm really poor at describing how I feel about things, at least verbally. I was in a state of shock,

"Peo[illegible]ear[illegible]hat I do and they flip,

Steve Rude's wrap-around cover illustration of SPACE GHOST for Comico's COMING ATTRACTIONS monthly.

that's the only way I can describe it.

PAUL: *It was nice to see that somebody took it very seriously, you know. Not that most people don't. And I think you deserved it.*

STEVE: Thanks.

PAUL: *How do you feel when you go to a convention?*

STEVE: Well, I could answer that by telling you what I felt the *first* time I went to a convention: I was scared and very nervous, and I paced myself *horribly*. I learned over the years how to *pace* myself. What that comes down to meaning is that you can't please everybody, a lot of people aren't going to get sketches. I did too many, I tried to please everybody, and it was worse than working — it drove me nuts, I never lifted my *head* up!

PAUL: *In Europe they do that all of the time, they expect* that.

STEVE: I'm glad I'm here. *(Laughter.)* I've learned over the years to pace myself. One thing that I'm proud of is my own personal conduct at conventions. I try to keep in mind that people, whether *I* think so or not, perceive me as a role model — in the same way that I *idolized* people that I grew up emulating artistically. So, I conduct myself in a very professional manner.

PAUL: *Well, you enjoy the fans.*

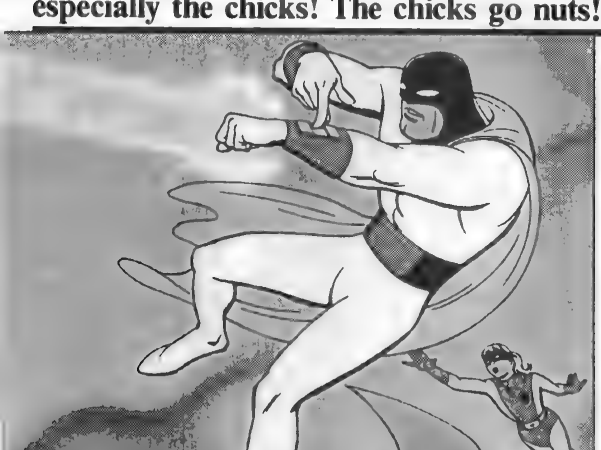
STEVE: Yeah, I do.

PAUL: *You have respect for them?*

STEVE: No, I don't automatically have respect for them. Once I get to *know* people, my respect increases a lot. I find out who they are and what they do, *that* gives me respect for them. I always make it a point to ask them what they do. You ought to do that sometime, ask these people that are standing in line for sketches what they do for a living — it's *fascinating!*

PAUL: *Well, you're good with the fans. Let's face it, comic-book artists are, like, locked away, and conventions are their chance to get out there and meet with the fans. But I've met some cartoonists . . . I mean, if they were rude to me like they*

especially the chicks! The chicks go nuts!"



were rude to other people, they'd be missing some teeth.

STEVE: I have honestly never seen a professional treat a fan like crap. I've heard *stories* about people who have, though. And I've seen fans be rude to the professionals, but I've never seen the professionals go back at them.

PAUL: *Chaykin doesn't take any shit.*

STEVE: Chaykin does it all in good humor, though. Everybody's onto him, everybody knows and loves him for what he is, or at least *accepts* him for what he is.

PAUL: *A phony!*

STEVE: Yeah. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Howard, I'm kidding, only kidding.*

STEVE: There's no pretense about **Chaykin** at all.

PAUL: *Do you find that the conventions fire you up? Do you get flown around to different conventions?*

STEVE: I could probably experience convention burn-out if I wanted to, but I honestly do not get called up from many people to come.

PAUL: *You don't?*

STEVE: No, I don't. San Diego and Chicago are given to me, people *expect* me to show up at those, and First flies me in.

PAUL: *Have you ever been laid at a convention?* (Laughter.)

STEVE: I have never once been laid at a convention, Paul.

PAUL: *Aw, too bad.*

STEVE: I have been told that there have been several women that would have been interested —

PAUL: *I met two of them.* (Laughter.) Never mind — you're a fine upstanding young man.

STEVE: Yeah, right.

PAUL: *Steve's going fucking red here — look like you got a suntan.*

STEVE: *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Have you ever found that the fact that you are a cartoonist, or that you collect comic books, to be a turnoff with women?*

"I've never seen a pro treat a fan like crap."

From the early days of NEXUS — Baron & Rude (in that order).

STEVE: You know, I have never gotten that in my life. People hear about what I do and they flip, *especially* the chicks! The chicks go nuts!

PAUL: *I met a few at a convention going, "Oh, I just met Steve Rude — oooh!" They were, like, really gone.*

STEVE: Are you putting me on, man?

PAUL: *No, I'm serious. There was some girl, she was*

STEVE: Was she cute? *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Yeah, she was cute. And this other bird came over, they were, like, swooning.*

STEVE: Hey, I'm in the right business, what can I say!

PAUL: *That's a thing that I like about comics now, is that the whole fandom thing has changed from being just the boy's club. Most of the people that were into comics were male, but now we're finding more young girls reading comics.*

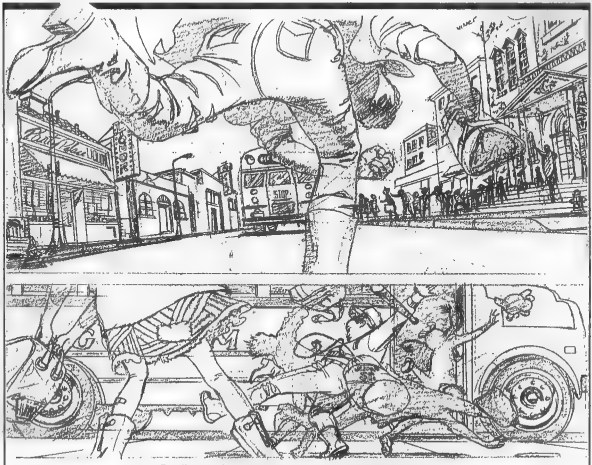
STEVE: So, how do you explain that?

PAUL: *Maybe Chris Claremont's X-MEN, what do you think?*

STEVE: Well, for one thing, my personal theory is that young people, male or female, will attach themselves to anything that is considered hip. It's like rock 'n'roll — comics are starting to float into those waters of being hip and cool, so the young people are checking them out. And somewhere along the line we started accumulating a better ratio of women that wanted to get involved in the writing and drawing of comic books. I'm not equipped with the right kind of fact sheet to figure out where these things happen and how they come about — I'm just *glad* that it's happening.

PAUL: *What I was trying to get at before was that now comics have gotten out into the mainstream. Like, they've gone from reporting that ACTION #1 is selling for $50,000, whatever the hell it's worth, to telling about the artists and the art, treating them as "real" writers and "real" artists. And they're paying attention to things like the Iran/Contra book that was done over at Eclipse, which was really amazing. I think comics are*

"It's like rock 'n' roll — comics are hip and cool."



Pencil panels from page six (WORLD'S FINEST COMICS).

entering a new age.

STEVE: I'm all for it. The Iran/Contra book, the AIDS book, other stuff like that, this is what makes me the most *proud* of being in this business at this time. We're all becoming very legitimate in the eyes of the public, and those are the things that are doing it. So, anything that's in that circle of legitimacy, that's breaking the old mold, I'm behind it 100 percent.

PAUL: *Do you feel that there is too much hype on comic books?*

STEVE: No, I don't, I do not feel there's too much hype. I mean, we do it among ourselves a little too much, but we're obviously trying to thrust our stuff in front of the public, and for a good reason. There's a *reason* why they should pay attention to us now, after all of these years. Better that than we not have a spokesperson.

PAUL: *Which for a long time was Stan Lee.*

STEVE: And it's been **Frank Miller** for the last few years, and all power to him.

PAUL: *Now, do you find in drawing NEXUS - because that's where you're mainly attached as a cartoonist — what would you say is the percentage of women that enjoy NEXUS?*

STEVE: I would say a good percentage of the mail is from women, small though that may be.

PAUL: *And what do they write?*

STEVE: Well, I'll tell you, I can answer that by telling you what I've *personally* heard from women when I've talked to them about NEXUS: Women have told me — and this includes some who are doing stuff in the business — they like the soft, romantic side in NEXUS. And that makes me feel really good because it means that nothing I do is perceived as being *sexist* or unfair to women.

The criticism we've got, **Heidi MacDonald** gave us a lot of flak for a couple of "up the panty" shots that she thought were ridiculously overdrawn or suggestive and stuff, and she *hated* this Lesbian thing that we had going with Sundra and Jil. I mean, she saw it as being really exploitative — and, for the record, she has a definite point. I mean, I *hate* to think that I am responsible for exploiting things like that, but —

PAUL: *Well, were you?*

STEVE: Was I exploiting that? Yes, in the way that it was something that was so unconventional to me — just as I will do *anything* that I consider real unconventional. But **Baron** and I both agreed that this is something that could conceivably happen.

PAUL: *Well, do you find in retrospect that it was a mistake?*

STEVE: No, I never regret anything I ever did.

PAUL: *So, what did she say exactly?*

STEVE: She thought we were jumping on our own bandwagon, you know, and . . . she suggested that we were somehow getting off on having this Lesbian thing going on.

PAUL: *Well, who cares, really? Listen, Lesbians exist, gay men exist, men who like big tits exist. I mean, we should all have a theatre in comics in which we can, like, have our jollies.*

STEVE: Well, actually, I *don't* agree with that — I don't think that guys should

"We're becoming legitimate in the eyes of the public."

"On the Town," a plate from Rude's 1982 NEXUS portfolio.

have their own little fantasies exploited, because look what it's done.

PAUL: *But there's an audience there.*

STEVE: Well, there's always an audience for anything, no matter *what* it is; as sick as anything that can be imagined, there's always going to be an audience for that kind of crap. I don't do things for . . . I think about all of the things in comics that are done, all of the sick violence, the graphic violence, all of the horrible sexual things — I open up a goddamned issue of WHISPER and everybody's getting raped or they've got a crowbar hanging out of their mouth, you know. There's an *audience* for that kind of crap, people are buying it.

PAUL: *But — this brings me to another*

"I like to get criticism. Groth goes too far."

thing — Alex Toth did storyboards on a film called HICKEY AND BOGGS which had Robert Culp and Bill Cosby, it was as if the I-SPY guys quit the business and became private detectives, okay. There was a shot in there where Bill Cosby's wife got a two-by-four . . . oh, how do I say it . . . I don't know how else to say it, she got a two-by-four rammed up her. But the way they did it, it came across on the screen and yet it was tasteful. What I'm trying to say is there's a way of handling violence where there's more trauma in your head than what's shown.

STEVE: Anyone who can do that has got much more respect from me than someone who can't pull it off.

PAUL: *Yeah. Sometimes it's far more powerful to —*

STEVE: Sometimes! It's *always* much more powerful, and it's always more ingenious.

PAUL: *I don't know, I think sometimes it's better to, like, see it when Marciano hits Walcott.*

STEVE: What?

PAUL: *It was a great fucking shot, man — but we're getting off the track.*

STEVE: I really want to see more women reading comics, nothing would make me happier than to see a 50/50 split.

PAUL: *What did you think of what Heidi MacDonald said?*

STEVE: She's a good writer; **Baron** thinks she's the best writer in comics right now, at least for *critical* journalism. I'm *glad* she gave us the flak, I'm glad she spoke up and told what she felt. I like to get criticism. **Groth** goes too far sometimes, though. I think he should use his position more responsibly.

PAUL: *THE COMICS JOURNAL, they can really fucking assassinate you.*

STEVE: Yeah, they're worse than the yellow press in Hong Kong, right. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *But if you got nothing but praise, right — "Steve Rude the Dude is great" for everything you did — don't you think you would reverse creatively?*

STEVE: No, no

PAUL: *But it might in others, wouldn't you agree?*

STEVE: Well, I would say to them to keep their priorities straight. Once you put things in perspective, you realize that you're just one in a million and you should just be as humble as the situation demands of you.

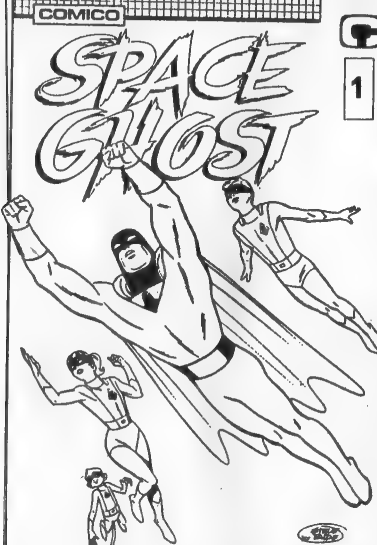
PAUL: *Okay. Well, how did NEXUS come about? How did you hook up with Mike Baron?*

STEVE: Well, NEXUS came about back in 1980, I think. **Baron** and I had known each other for about a year and had done a few projects which we had tried to sell to HEAVY METAL and other magazines. I would personally fly to New York and go to the offices of these major places like DC and Marvel and get a bunch of good pointers, and that was really really helpful. It was all rejected, but I would come back with critiques.

PAUL: *What did you do in your samples?*

STEVE: They were actual stories that

On David Mazzucchelli: "We have similar styles and



Here's the actual cover that graced Comico's SPACE GHOST one-shot.

Baron and I had done. One got published by Pacific Comics — I can't believe they bought that piece of crap. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *But it was kind of funny — the encyclopedia salesman,after the Apocalypse thing, right?*

STEVE: Right. That was our weird sense of humor that we always had, that has always been the chemistry between us. Our personalities came through despite our amateurness.

PAUL: *I think the drawing and the style was there.*

STEVE: Yeah, I agree.

PAUL: *So, how did you and Baron meet?*

STEVE: We met in Madison. It was just one of those things: I'm getting around and making contacts and pretty soon one contact said, "There's this guy named **Baron** that you ought to meet." So we met. I was going to art school, going to a technical college for a filmmaking class and an airbrushing class — I had nothing but time back then.

PAUL: *So, what did you think when you first met Baron?*

STEVE: Well, the first thing that impressed me about him was that he knew all of these famous comic-book stars — they were only *names* to me, so I thought that was really neat. **Baron** had been around, he was older than I was, more worldly. I didn't know good writing from nothing, I'd take anything that a guy gave me to work with; but I was able to get *into* anything he gave me, pretty much, which was nice. A lot of stuff didn't excite me to begin with, my heart was always with super-heroes because that was the thing that I felt most comfortable around.

PAUL: *With the super-heroes, what really kicked that off? Was it your exposure to SPACE GHOST as a little kid?*

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: *More so than BATMAN or SUPERMAN?*

STEVE: BATMAN and SUPERMAN did nothing for me. The only artist who ever did anything for me in comic books was **Kirby.** I never got off on **Ditko's** work, I thought he was one of the poorest draftsmen on the face of the planet, and drew the *ugliest* people I'd ever seen — he couldn't draw a pretty girl to save his life. But everybody loves him, they can't talk enough about **Ditko.** They never mention **Romita.**

PAUL: *Johnny drew sexy women.*

STEVE: I thought he was ten times the superior artist to **Ditko. Romita** was the **Jon Whitcomb** of comics.

PAUL: *Let's talk about other artists. Who in comics today do you admire?*

STEVE: Well, old-timers aside, the ones that personally appeal to me . . . the one that I think of offhand first is **David Mazzucchelli.** We have similar styles and the same . . . I don't know. We just think alike, I think, in terms of storytelling and how to get what we want out of a scene. I've always admired his work a lot.

PAUL: *I think he really took off when he teamed up with Frank Miller. Who else? What do you think of Chaykin?*

STEVE: *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Okay, what do you think of Richard Corben?*

STEVE: I am in awe of his mastery of color. He's a guy that really understands how to put form down in paint. He's incredible. His sense of coloring is incredible.

PAUL: *What about his storytelling?*

STEVE: Well, you know, the subject matter of the things that he does is not exactly my cup of tea. There's crazed sexual barbarians running around and stuff.

PAUL: *I love all of that stuff.*

STEVE: It's something I'm probably better off not commenting on.

. . . We think alike, I think, in terms of storytelling."

Model sheet by Alex Toth, '66.

PAUL: *What did you think of Jose Garcia-Lopez when he did that fill-in on NEXUS?*

STEVE: He did an incredible job. I think probably Jose is either the best or the runner-up for the most-knowledgeable figure draftsman in the business. That's not talking about his storytelling or any of that other kind of stuff, but he probably knows the human body better than anybody else out there right now.

PAUL: *So, who else?*

STEVE: Well, let me just say that there's only a few comics that I actually read. Offhand, the only ones that I can think of are OMAHA, THE CAT DANCER, and CONCRETE. **Paul Chadwick** has got the touch, it's going to be humane and not transient like 90 percent of the garbage out there — he's got *that* touch. It's simple to pinpoint his success point, which is he just tells very human stories about human drama. You don't need a bunch of super-heroic shit or anything else that some people think is necessary to sell a comic book with to make his stuff work.

PAUL: *I always thought he should make a 20-minute film. He's done storyboards, like I do. He did PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE and —*

STEVE: What!

PAUL: *Yeah.*

STEVE: You're kidding!

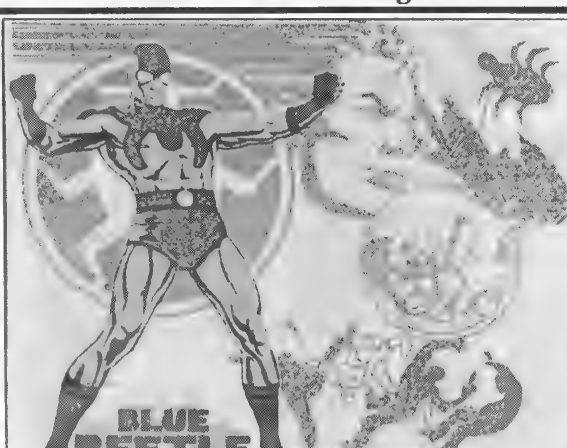
PAUL: *And he turned down Tim Burton for storyboarding the BATMAN film.*

STEVE: You're kidding!

PAUL: *I beat Paul out on MY SCIENCE PROJECT — which was no big thrill, Paul.* (Laughter.) *But what I'm trying to say is that I think CONCRETE would make a nice series of specials on TV.*

STEVE: What about the BATMAN thing! He turned down the BATMAN

"Mike Golden is a real enigma to me."



From DC Comics' WHO'S WHO, Steve Rude provided the illustration for the BLUE (Dibko) BEETLE

movie?

PAUL: *Yeah, because he loves what he's doing, man. He's committed. I'm making assumptions here, but I think the man believes in what he's doing — just like you do. Well, what other artists, what other cartoonists do you like working today?*

STEVE: Let's just say that there's a lot of guys that I'm not personally in sync with as far as artistic aesthetics. There's a handful of people that are real forefront trendsetters in the business, and it is critically important now for comics that they are there. **Sienkiewicz** is one, **Chaykin** is another, **Dave Stevens** is another. And there are certainly others.

PAUL: *You know, Mike Golden is a guy I always thought if he was more regular he'd be up there. He's a killer artist. I thought THE 'NAM was mighty stuff, but I've always liked his work. Have you looked at Mike Golden's stuff?*

STEVE: His work is incredible, yeah. **Golden** is a real enigma to me. I don't know anything about the guy, I just know when he was hot he was *real* hot. Even though he was just "in" for a short period of time, everybody knows that he really set the comics world on fire. He influenced a *lot* of people in just a brief time. But he's lost all of his momentum now because he hasn't, you know, channelled his career in the right way to be in the limelight.

PAUL: *Now, you've always painted. What are your aspirations there?*

STEVE: Simply to get as good as the people I admire who are painters, that's all it is.

PAUL: *And they are?*

STEVE: Andrew Loomis, it started with **Loomis**. I loved the way he painted beautiful people.

PAUL: *Very romantic.*

STEVE: Oh, very romantic, idealized looking people — clean, beautiful girls and handsome as hell guys.

PAUL: *I look at his stuff and think of movie stars.*

STEVE: Yeah. That's the aesthetic that I've always loved. Only in the last few years have I discovered the people that influenced him, or other people that painted like him during that time period. That's the reason that I want to paint. If it weren't for people like that, I might not even be inspired to want to try it.

PAUL: *Have you gone and looked up these artists who inspired you?*

STEVE: I have. The one I met — I'm *still* in awe of the fact that I actually met this guy — is **Harry Anderson.** One of the greatest compliments I ever got was when **Harry Anderson** checked out my sketchbook and said he'd never seen anything like it in his whole life. He was an illustrator from the '40s, '30s, a contemporary of **Loomis.** He's 83 years old now —

PAUL: *Is he still painting?*

STEVE: He's not painting, for reasons

"Some guys will die at the drawing board, you know."

that I don't know. There's certainly a lot of guys that are his age that are still doing it. **Tom Lovell** is still painting, he's as old as Harry is, same age in fact. Some guys will die at the drawing board, you know.

PAUL: *I think that's the wonderful part about drawing or painting, that you can do it as long as your mind and eyes and hands are functional.*

STEVE: Yeah

PAUL: *Even if your mind's a little bit wacky, if you have those motor skills and the imagination's still in the eyes a bit, you can maintain it quite nice.*

STEVE: That's a good thought, Paul.

PAUL: *You did a painting for PUNISHER. How did that come about?*

STEVE: **Carl Potts** called me up.

PAUL: *How did you like doing it?*

STEVE: It was tough because I don't know the first damn thing about guns and crap like that. But that's one of the blessings in disguise about this business, that's how you educate yourself, by taking on things that make you think, that you're not totally familiar with. Sometimes a little boundary stretching is good for us — in fact, it's *always* good for us, even though it can be painful.

PAUL: *Did they ever ask you to draw THE PUNISHER or anything like that?*

STEVE: They never asked me to do that, no.

PAUL: *Would Baron like to see you do that?*

STEVE: Sure, **Baron** would like to see me do anything.

PAUL: *Do you see yourself doing a fully-painted comic?*

STEVE: That's hard to say. In the back of my mind I have definite plans — I hope it can somehow work out, since JONNY QUEST has been cancelled — but I wanted to do a JONNY QUEST 48- or 60-page *special* that I would write with somebody, and then draw, ink and color myself. That's as close as I would come to painting. I'm still reeling from hearing about **Chadwick** being offered BATMAN.

PAUL: *It's all true, folks. This brings me to the next question: Crossover, comics and films, what's your position on that?*

STEVE: Well, I don't have much of a position on it. I like them both for what they are.

PAUL: *Well, I mean the relationship.*

STEVE: The relationship?

PAUL: *Do you see much of a relationship between the two forms?*

STEVE: I do. I felt it most particularly when I was doing SPACE GHOST. I had fun explaining to people when I got done with the book that in my mind I saw the entire story as we did it in comic-book form as an animated episode.

PAUL: *And it did work as such.*

STEVE: I'm glad you think so.

PAUL: *What did you think of Ken Steacy's work on that?*

STEVE: All I can say about Ken is that . . . I picked him out of every colorist, literally, in the world. I chose him to work on this.

PAUL: *Do you think that you might have liked to have inked it yourself? I think Blyberg did a nice job — was it Blyberg?*

STEVE: Yeah, **Blyberg.** He did a very good job, Willie's a good guy. Would I have wanted to ink it myself? You know, I wonder if I would have gotten too picky about it. *(Pause.)*

PAUL: *You mean it was tough enough just to pencil the thing the way you wanted and then divorce yourself from it?*

STEVE: I . . . yeah, that in itself. And then also, I wasn't sure how to go about inking the damn thing. I just kind of drew a blank with that. I knew how I wanted it to *look*, but as far as inking it, I was actually content to let someone who knew how to really handle a brush do it. I mean, certainly the job I turned in was about as tight pencilling as I've ever done before I lightboxed the whole damn story, you know, off of layouts, so it was real tight, man.

PAUL: *So, would you say that was a high point for yourself personally, drawing SPACE GHOST?*

Steve Rude's version of DC Comics' Dark Knight: The BATMAN.

"If I died the next day, I'd accomplished a major goal."

STEVE: As high a point as I can ever get in my career, I think. I knew that when I finished SPACE GHOST . . . I felt if I were to die the next day, I had accomplished a major career goal.

PAUL: *Now, some people might think, "Oh, drawing SPACE GHOST, that's a major career goal?" But I get the feeling that anybody who works in comics got that first spark, that first love of it, when they were little kids — comics or animation. And that's what you want to do, be true to that little kid. It's very important.*

STEVE: It must sound silly to someone outside the business. It's kind of hard to explain what it's all about. And I'll tell you, working with Comico was incredibly fun. I've never felt so supported by such a select group of peers before. It could not have gone *better!*

PAUL: *I knew how important that character was to you, I saw it in the work. How did it come about? How did Evanier come into it?*

STEVE: Well, Mark came in basically to help clean me up on the story, basically, with input from a few other people. He was there to say, "Does this work?" I didn't know the first thing about writing, all I knew was that this thing kind of unfolded itself in my mind. **Darrell McNeil** and I worked out the plot.

PAUL: *And did you remain true to that? Explain it for those who haven't seen it, what was the plot?*

STEVE: Do you want me to explain the *original* idea?

PAUL: *That'd be nice, yeah.*

STEVE: Okay. The original idea was -- Darrell and I, when we were first talking about this a long time ago, we were just discussing logically what had to happen to make this thing the most *colossal* thing imaginable! That, for people who know anything about SPACE GHOST, was to do our version of The Council of Doom episode. For those who remember it -- you would have to have seen it when it was on back in '67 — it's about all of these villains ganging up on Space Ghost and trying to kill him. So we were doing a riff on that.

PAUL: *Didn't they try to do that in that six-part episode where everybody got together, like the Herculoids and --*

STEVE: That's what it was

PAUL: *Would you like to work on a SPACE GHOST special?*

STEVE: I would say yes in a second -- only for a special, though. The only condition would be that I would go back and do something to, like . . .

PAUL: *Return it to what it was?*

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: *I'd like to work on that, that would be fun.*

STEVE: Oh, it would be incredible.

PAUL: *There is this passion, that's what you have with SPACE GHOST, it came across — and I'm looking forward to the second one.*

STEVE: Yeah, me too.

PAUL: *Well, what's next with SPACE GHOST?*

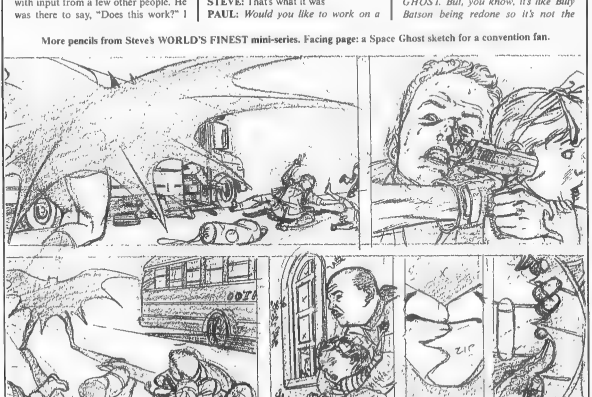
STEVE: The second script is actually already written, they're just waiting for me to get around to doing it.

PAUL: *Is that a thing that you did with Darrell, or is this another concept?*

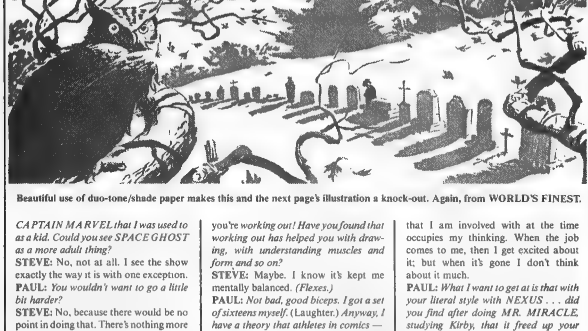
STEVE: That was something that we worked on together, we thought up together.

PAUL: *When you did SPACE GHOST . . . I wanted to see a racier SPACE GHOST. But, you know, it's like Billy Batson being redone so it's not the*

More pencils from Steve's WORLD'S FINEST mini-series. Facing page: a Space Ghost sketch for a convention fan.



"All of my knowledge of the human figure has come from



Beautiful use of duo-tone/shade paper makes this and the next page's illustration a knock-out. Again, from WORLD'S FINEST.

CAPTAIN MARVEL that I was used to as a kid. Could you see SPACE GHOST as a more adult thing?

STEVE: No, not at all. I see the show exactly the way it is with one exception.

PAUL: *You wouldn't want to go a little bit harder?*

STEVE: No, because there would be no point in doing that. There's nothing more outrageous to me, and to a *lot* of people, than to see old-time characters brought back and updated and stuff. Some people really *hate* that! Sometimes it works . . . I mean, it may not be the same character, you know . . .

PAUL: *Well, and SPACE GHOST is wholesome, like CAPTAIN MARVEL, nice and funny and entertaining. But I like some meat, you know.*

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: *What I mean — and maybe this is getting off on another subject — but I think that comics should be eclectic and appeal to all kinds of people. There aren't enough girls' comics out there.*

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: *And, like, you could have a go at anything from SPACE GHOST to BLACK KISS. Could you see yourself doing something like that?*

STEVE: Conceivably, but I would still be discreet. We show sex in NEXUS, Paul, you know that. We show topless chicks and half naked guys, but it's always done with taste, with discretion.

PAUL: *You never see any full-on —*

STEVE: *No,* because —

PAUL: *And even Howie is at ground level, you know.*

STEVE: Yeah. *(Laughter.)* Howie, he hates to be called Howie.

PAUL: *But I can kick Howie's ass so it don't matter.* (Laughter.) *I love you, Howard, don't worry about it. He's working out now.* (Laughter.) *And you're working out! Have you found that working out has helped you with drawing, with understanding muscles and form and so on?*

STEVE: Maybe. I know it's kept me mentally balanced. *(Flexes.)*

PAUL: *Not bad, good biceps. I got a set of sixteens myself.* (Laughter.) *Anyway, I have a theory that athletes in comics —*

STEVE: Yeah, that's a good subject.

PAUL: *Frank Frazetta is an athlete, obviously Jack Kirby was —*

STEVE: Yeah, boxer. **Evanier** says **Kirby** was a boxer for a day. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *But he learned enough to pass it on to Captain America.*

STEVE: Right, right.

PAUL: *I feel that athletics helps give you an affinity for movement, and it seems to me that the artists who are really tremendous, have power and passion, were athletes. Have you found that athletics have helped your drawing?*

STEVE: I can't say that it really has. I can't see any relationship, not really. I mean, I certainly *know* what the muscle system looks like; I know what a *natural* looking muscle system looks like, and I know what I consider the *ideal* body to be. There are other elements that contribute to it, Paul. It might contribute to something, I could be wrong. All of my knowledge of the human figure has just come from drawing well-muscled bodies from whatever sources, from photos or from studying people in real life, on the beach or whatever. And it's *always* a blast to watch chicks, of course. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Well, you've just blown my theory on athletics.*

STEVE: Fact is stranger than fiction. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *When you take a break from NEXUS, do you miss it terribly?*

STEVE: No, I don't, because the thing that I am involved with at the time occupies my thinking. When the job comes to me, then I get excited about it; but when it's gone I don't think about it much.

PAUL: *What I want to get at is that with your literal style with NEXUS . . . did you find after doing MR. MIRACLE, studying Kirby, that it freed up your style? How do you feel about it? What did you bring from that experience to your regular work?*

STEVE: Well, the first thing that I noticed was that I was faster at drawing, I noticed that my speed had picked up. I don't understand exactly where that breakthrough came, but those are the little fringe benefits that *happen* when you challenge yourself in different directions and areas.

PAUL: *Did you find that your thought process had changed somehow?*

STEVE: Yeah, it did. In the back of my mind I was thinking about how fast **Kirby** was able to do this stuff, and I think that may have kind of felt itself on me, as far as seeing if I could do it as *fast* as he could. I couldn't, of course, but I noticed when I was drawing the bodies . . . there was more of a fluidity to the sense of drawing a body than with NEXUS. That freed me up a lot, it was a great experience.

PAUL: *And the way that you compose a picture now is kind of different as well, more dynamic.*

STEVE: That could well be. Someone like you would be even more aware of it than I would; to me these things occur in a natural kind of way. But I've had people write in and tell me that ever since MR. MIRACLE there's been a change.

PAUL: *I quite often feel that if we force ourselves to change — and it's better if it's induced because we want to go that way*

drawing well-muscled bodies from whatever sources."

— all of a sudden you start picking up on different things, everything becomes fresher, newer, and it becomes exciting. Not that what you did before was not exciting, just that this sparked you in other ways.

STEVE: Well, we're a product of our experiences, right. With that experience I am able to add to the long list of influences that are going to make my work better.

PAUL: *Now, NEXUS seems to be a lot about change, and there was a very big change in the series just awhile back, and now people who haven't read NEXUS can pick it up and only have a few back issues to pick up.*

STEVE: Yes, Horatio Hellpop is no longer Nexus.

PAUL: *Forever?*

STEVE: Well, we can't say, it would be unfair to go beyond that.

PAUL: *The three birds didn't work out.*

STEVE: No. They tried but they couldn't do it.

PAUL: *They were too nasty, they enjoyed it too much.*

STEVE: Yeah. *(Laughter.)*

PAUL: *Horatio didn't like killing people, and these three young birds really liked bumping people off. One of them got a little bit tangled up with love and then didn't want to kill anybody, but the little*

4/10/89
SUPERMAN
FASTHER
LIGHTER

"Baron is somehow too smart for his own good."

one is a nasty bit of business.

STEVE: Yeah. And now there's a new dude who's Nexus. And I want to explain to people, some of the readers who may be *upset* over this change, **Baron** and I regard our stories as a by-product of serious, mature thinking. In *life* there are changes that happen, *natural* changes that just come about as a matter of personal evolution — thus it is with our stories, they do the same thing. They evolve. We can either go with that directional sense our instincts are supplying us with, or do it in a more *contrived* way, which would be a serious mistake.

PAUL: *Which is the standard comic-book way of doing things.*

STEVE: Yeah.

PAUL: *That's what I like about NEXUS, it's like an ongoing soap opera.*

STEVE: It couldn't be described more exactly than that, that's what it is.

PAUL: *Is Mike Baron Horatio, or are you Horatio?*

STEVE: It's a composite of both. I see myself in Horatio a lot. Women have told me that. I think anybody that *knows* me knows what parts of Horatio are me; which is *always* very flattering, because he's a very sensitive, caring person.

PAUL: *And Baron . . . you know, Baron is quite prolific. Has he faced burn-out?*

STEVE: Baron? No, as far as I know he hasn't.

PAUL: *He's just a writing fool.*

STEVE: He is. **Baron** is somehow too smart for his own good, I think somehow he'll always avoid burn-out, just keep one step ahead of it.

PAUL: *His stories always are enjoyable.*

STEVE: They always are, he's never turned out shit — not with NEXUS he hasn't.

PAUL: *NEXUS is where his heart's at, it's his baby.*

STEVE: No doubt, it will always be. I'll tell you, we were going to end this whole thing with #50, and fate stepped in and stopped us from doing that.

PAUL: *What happened?*

STEVE: First said, "You can't do this, we have all of this promotion planned!" We didn't know anything about all of this shit —

PAUL: *They suckered you!*

STEVE: Right, they *suckered* us into keeping it going, that's *exactly* what they did. We just felt . . . I guess we lost our minds for a second, you know. But we were prevented from —

PAUL: *You lost your minds for a second, how do you mean?*

STEVE: Well, looking back, it would have been *foolish* to end it. Right now we feel like we've started all over again. We feel like . . . you know, what could we do? Another reason we were going to end it at #50 is we felt so frustrated that the readership was never going to grow beyond what it was; we were *always* going to be stuck at 30,000, we were *never* going to make any royalties off of NEXUS. We haven't seen a fucking royalty check, it bugs the shit out of us. And other things were bothering us, it wasn't that we were getting tired of the book. We had our reasons back then, you know. We felt incredibly proud of the entire run, *never* a turkey in the group . . . but anyway, the bottom line is we got talked out of it.

PAUL: *Did they offer you more money?*

STEVE: No, they didn't. What they offered us was that they were finally going to promote it in a big way. And we're all excited right now — the mini-series was a very positive move. It was so wacky and wild, these three sweet girls becoming Nexus — I don't know what

STEVE RUDE

"When I feel that it's too drastic for people

the readers thought, but **Baron** and I went wild! We were so happy with that whole four-issue thing, it was as strong and self-contained as four issues of anything ever. It was an exciting read, wasn't it?

PAUL: *It was a real tilt off the kilt, man. It was a lot of fun.*

STEVE: I really liked drawing those girls. I don't know *how* these people take over, I don't know where their personalities come from, they just come out, you know. They come out in **Baron's** writing, and then they come out when I draw then.

PAUL: *Well, this is the nice thing about comics, about NEXUS anyway, is you've got real people in a fantastic situation, which makes it far more believable. I think you got into that.*

STEVE: I don't know where that comes from! What am I drawing on?

PAUL: *Life, man. You have an acute sense of people. I've seen you in a crowd, man. I've seen you zone out and just* look *at people, watch people doing ordinary things. When you combine that into a fantastic situation, you have something that's believable which anybody can relate to. I think this is why super-heroes have got a bad rap, because it's hard to relate to them, you don't come into contact with people like that.*

STEVE: Yeah, I agree.

PAUL: *So, even though you may have had some disagreements with First Comics as to business —*

STEVE: Yeah, that's all true.

PAUL: *— you still love the character?*

STEVE: In spite of them, yes.

PAUL: *I think it's a great shame about publishers and creativity — and it's the same for film producers — the lack of respect for the creators, and exploiting the fact that the creators enjoy the work. I'm not just singling out First here, it seems common in comics, in cinema, in commercial art, you know. I mean, NEXUS is probably a real breadwinner for First, and you should be fairly compensated. Just like everybody that works at Marvel or DC or whatever should be paid what they're worth.*

STEVE: In an ideal situation that would always be true. We actually get treated, probably, better than anybody else at First. We've had to *fight* for the respect, though — they wouldn't hand it out to us. My biggest complaint about First is that in my mind, you know, *we* are the people supplying them with their livelihood — and they in turn are doing it for us, giving us a chance to do that. That's part of the mutual exchange, but it can go beyond that.

For example, I think that I should just periodically, **Baron** and I both, and the other people who work hard over there, be given *raises*. Just for the sheer hell of it, just to show that they haven't lost sight of the people side, the human side of what the bottom line is. Their fucking *profits* aren't the bottom line here — and if anybody ever tells me that, they better step back! That is *not* the bottom line. That was why everyone got up in arms about the **Kirby** fiasco.

PAUL: *Well, we all feel that Jack has been mistreated, but then Jack worked in a system that he went along with.*

STEVE: Because **Kirby** was a professional all of his life, and being a professional to him means that he turned the work out to make a living for his damn family. That's the side of it that they are always going to use against him, okay. *But*, the other side of that coin is simple compensation through an act of financial reward. The guy *made* them what they are! A simple act of fair play and kindness —

PAUL: *But that's business, Steve.*

STEVE: Yeah, that's business, but just look at what he's *done!* Thank him in a way that will really pay him off, why not? **Siegel** and **Shuster** get their little pittance every year because Warners were *bullied* into it, right — they were *bullied* into this act of kindness!

PAUL: *But Bob Kane made his own deal, didn't he?*

STEVE: I don't know about that.

PAUL: *I'm open for correction here, but I think that Bob Kane negotiated his own deal. What it comes down to is you can either work for them or not. But Jack created all of the characters, Marvel is the house that Jack built. It's all in your negotiation. Have you and Baron ever thought of, you know, kissing off First and taking NEXUS somewhere else?*

STEVE: We would do that in a moment if we were driven to that.

PAUL: *But right now you're happy with First?*

STEVE: Well, let's just say that we worked hard at establishing an understanding with these people. The understanding is that we're not to be bullied, we're not to be taken advantage of, and

to buy, I know that it has to be done."

we're not to be taken for granted. I mean, there's nothing that makes me more mad than to be taken for granted by the company that is supposed to be, you know, standing behind you and supporting you and stuff.

PAUL: *Well, it's my belief that if you* care *about what you're doing, you don't need to be bullied because you're already hard on yourself. You know what I mean?*

STEVE: Paul, there will always be bullies. There will always be people that will want to take advantage of any weakness they see. First does *not* do that to us. And I like **Obadiah** a lot as a person.

PAUL: *It really comes down to who works out the better deal, in all reality. Stan worked out a better deal than Jack.*

STEVE: Stan was the kind of guy who would insist on nothing less.

PAUL: *There's nothing wrong with making the money, I think you should. You do good work, you should be compensated for it. That's why I am surprised that you haven't done as well with NEXUS as I feel you should have. Did you get a nice bonus from MR. MIRACLE?*

STEVE: Not a cent, never saw a cent. **Evanier** blames it on the fact that it was a newsprint book, because for newstand distribution you have to sell more copies to break even.

PAUL: *Sad thing, business.*

STEVE: For the record, **Evanier** and I were both going to give half our royalties off this to **Kirby** — we both came to that conclusion separately. I have to let my ethics speak for myself.

PAUL: *And it's a shame that Marvel doesn't recognize his value to them, but it all comes down to power of negbtiation.*

STEVE: Great saw, man.

PAUL: *Well, what about these recent changes in NEXUS, which I find quite exciting? Did you have any say in that? How do you and Baron work?*

STEVE: All of the ideas for story direction and stuff comes from **Baron.** I have nothing to do with that. Occasionally, he will call me up and sound off ideas and I'll tell him what I think, and then he'll go from there. But **Baron** is completely responsible for that. He's *totally* in charge because . . . well, it seems like everything he's ever done with the book have been things that I have agreed with.

One of the interesting things about working with **Baron** is that he will come to me with ideas that sound outrageously crazy, too *drastic.* That's the key. When I feel that it's too drastic for people to buy, I know it has to be done.

PAUL: *Now, he gives you the roughs, right, with stick figures and things?*

STEVE: That's what **Baron** does, because he thinks in a visual kind of a way rather than just with words.

PAUL: *Is that a great help to you? Do you stay with it or do you change it much?*

STEVE: Well, since **Baron** was the first writer I ever worked with, that was the style I got acclimated to. I've certainly grown used to it; it's just the way we work together. It's different than anyone else has probably ever done before.

PAUL: *Anyway, the new Nexus, what about him?*

STEVE: What about Stan? Stan is everything that Horatio *thought* he was but wasn't, really. **Baron** describes him as

Jack "King" Kirby . . . 'Nuff Said!

"I was offered an X-MEN thing and turned it down."

Steve Rude's original pencils from NEXUS #1 (pg. 10).

a philosopher. Horatio thought *he* was a philosopher, but compared to Stan he wasn't. Stan is a *real* philosopher, Stan is a *real* man of knowledge.

PAUL: *And he's a big sucker.*

STEVE: Yeah, he's huge.

PAUL: *How'd he get the job?*

STEVE: He applied. *(Laughter.)* After the girls got disillusioned, the Merk wanted to get much more selective. So, Stan . . . I like the guy a lot. He looks like a football player. He's a professor at a university, a *tenured* professor who taught history, so you know the guy's got to be real smart.

PAUL: *Is Horatio going to get jealous and want to come back?*

STEVE: Baron knows. *(Laughter.)* But even he doesn't know that far in advance what's going to happen. Stan does not find the job as easy as he thought he would — and a guy that smart doesn't really expect that, either. Stan is a real smart guy.

PAUL: *So, would you say that Stan is, to all intents and purposes,* a real *superhero? I mean, he looks the part, he's got the brains, and now he's been given the ability — but as a philosopher isn't he going to argue with the Merk? I mean, Horatio had a hard time, he suffered with all of this guilt —*

STEVE: Yeah, that's a really good question, Paul. I feel like calling up **Baron** right now and asking him that.

PAUL: *Well, you want to?*

STEVE: Right now it's too late, **Baron's** probably in bed.

PAUL: *The thing I would like to know — and maybe it would be better to have you and Baron together on this — to me, Nexus was kind of like Mad Max, he wondered about the consequences. Most other super-heroes are, like, vigilantes, and they don't pay any penance for all of the trouble that they bring upon people.*

STEVE: In real life it would be more like what we do in NEXUS. We do real life, man.

PAUL: *What other writers would you like to work with? Isn't Harlan Ellison a big fan of yours?*

STEVE: I'll tell you, I am incredibly flattered by his endorsement of NEXUS. I am embarrassed to tell you that the only things I've seen by Harlan are the movies that he's been involved with, and of course the TWILIGHT ZONE and STAR TREK things. I can't honestly say that I've read his works, which is embarrassing to me because I should have. I'll get around to reading Harlan. I don't know if I would want to work with him — that isn't to be taken as anything even closely resembling a slight, I just couldn't say. I would never underestimate the power of a good writer, so I would never automatically say no.

PAUL: *So, what other writers would you like to work with?*

STEVE: I got an offer from **Frank Miller** to work with him someday, and I know Frank and I would probably get along pretty good. I've read *his* works and liked them a lot, you know.

PAUL: *Could you ever see yourself working with Claremont?*

STEVE: I don't know. I've read issues of THE X-MEN, and I really respect him for what he's created, you know — and I'm always happy to hear that people have almost been made millionaires off fucking comics, it's long overdue. I was offered an X-MEN thing once and I turned it down.

PAUL: *Why?*

STEVE: Well, for a number of reasons. The **Kirby** issue was one of them, I was boycotting anything to do with Marvel at the time. I wrote **Shooter** and explained to him how I felt about the whole thing, and he sent me a nice letter back. But, if you just take **Claremont's** rep as a great writer aside, it comes down to: Does his sense of writing appeal to me? I *do* like his writing, I think he's a great writer, one of the best. But I don't know if he's someone I'd want to work with, I've never really thought about it.

PAUL: *What I would like to know now: There's a few people that I would have liked to see ink you, have a go at your work — pretty much like Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone having a duel.*

STEVE: Wow. Ideally, the way I like to think of what inkers can do to my work or anyone else's . . . I think the best inker for me would be someone who takes a very aggressive approach but does not lose my identity in the work, and there's only a handful of people out there that qualify in that league of ability. One that I can think of offhand is **Klaus Janson.** It would be neat to see what he would do

PAUL: *That's funny, I would have thought that you wouldn't have gone for that.*

STEVE: Well, I've seen what he's done with all of these people over the years, with **Miller** and **Colan**, and he's just done incredible things. He's what every inker should aspire to be. Whether they like his style or not, what he's able to do is quite dynamic. And I appreciate the fine technicians, guys like **Karl Kesel** and **Joe Sinnott** and people like that who have incredible technical *skills* — but I think too many people are misled into thinking that that's what inking is all about, pretty

The layout for Steve's GREEN HORNET cover.

"I'm happy to hear people have almost been

More Bat sketches — Kane style.

lines and slick brushstrokes.

PAUL: *I kind of like slick brushstrokes myself, but it's got to have weight and power and form.*

STEVE: Yeah. I think people will look at the surface qualities of an inker and be *sucked* into that, thinking that that's what the truth is about inking. But I can assure all of you aspiring artists that that is *not* what it's all about. It is knowing how to interpret into ink what a guy gives you in pencil.

PAUL: *A guy who I think is a nice halfway between Klaus Janson and the slickness of a Joe Simnott is Steve Leialoha.*

STEVE: **Leialoha** is an incredibly accomplished inker and draftsman.

PAUL: *From time to time he'll dabble in somebody else's style, and yet still remains true to himself. The man's got those techniques.*

STEVE: I agree. It would be interesting to see what would happen, Paul, if **Steve Leialoha** were to ink my work. I'd like to find out. I'm thinking, for the record, the best guy ever to touch my work — and there hasn't been many inkers, obviously — is **Carl Potts.** The guy only inked, like, two pages of mine.

PAUL: *What in?*

STEVE: It was this thing for the . . . it was the thing that we did to help out the hungry peoples of the world. He inked two pages of mine and, I'll tell you, it was just phenomenally well inked. He uses untraditional tools to get his look.

PAUL: *He's a good colorist, too.*

STEVE: He's good everything.

PAUL: *Not a bad guitar player either, I hear.* (Laughter.) *Let's get onto a digression about rock 'n' roll. The first NEXUS had a little bit of music in it; you had the record and all that. It was cute, and it showed that you guys had some balls for doing it.*

STEVE: Right.

PAUL: *But if you were to do it now, how would you differ?*

STEVE: Well, we're aware of the shortcomings of that record. It was over way too fast, it sped by too quickly, but that's because we only had so much time, we had to rush the damn thing by.

PAUL: *Did you do any voices on it?*

STEVE: No. I wasn't even there to watch the recording session. It was actually done in Madison, where we were all living, but I never lifted my head up from the goddamn drawing board back in those days.

PAUL: *Getting back to inkers, do you think that Mike Royer is underrated?*

STEVE: He's underrated, but because of Mike's humility . . . There are some people that can be as talented as all get out, but this is America, man, and if you don't do something to promote yourself, you're going to get washed aside. There are exceptions, of course. The greatest scenario would be to not seek it out, let everyone else do it for you — that's the *ideal* situation.

PAUL: *You can't find that.*

STEVE: That's not necessarily true. I know a guy, every success he's had — other than just his own perseverance — has just come to him, people just seek him out. That's the ideal situation — sit back in your room and work, produce everything that you feel, and let everybody else worry about the other aspects of all that crap.

PAUL: *Have you ever thought of getting into film, doing storyboards and all that?*

STEVE: You know, not storyboards, but I thought about being a director at one time. I felt, in all of my humble egotism, that I would make a great director. If I couldn't do it in comics, if I *couldn't* draw, I would for sure give a shot at directing movies. But there's a side of me that is very much a loner, and I don't know if I could deal with all of the things that have nothing to do with filmmaking, with the actual filming of a vision inside your mind.

PAUL: *Well, that's why you have*

made millionaires off comics. It's long overdue."

Another pencil page from WORLD'S FINEST — featuring Clark Kent and Bruce Wayne.

assistants and producers and specialists. They can keep you true to your visions. By the same token, they can obscure *your visions, you know what I mean.*

STEVE: The whole thing about directing is a pipe dream of mine.

PAUL: *You could do it.*

STEVE: I *could* do it. **Steve Rude** is a person of images, of visual images of feelings and thoughts, and it goes into comics. It could have gone into movies.

PAUL: *How would you see NEXUS in film?*

STEVE: In film? Well, at present a friend and I are trying to push for something that would be colossal if it could be done right — and the only way I attempt to do *anything* is to do it right — a NEXUS animated cartoon show done in the animation style and writing style and all of that kind of stuff of JONNY QUEST. It would have to be the equal of that to make it worth our effort. They say it's impossible, they say that it can't be done. We shall do it if I have any say over this at all. I'd love to see it, but the only thing I care about is that it's done right. I don't care about *anything* else. I don't care about the $50 million I'd make, I couldn't give a shit about that. *(Laughter.)*

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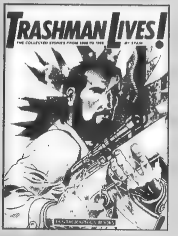

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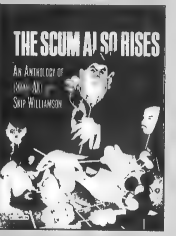

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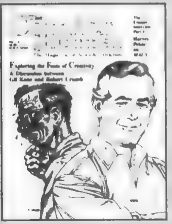

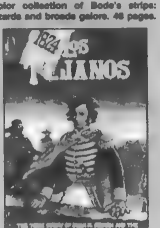

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"I've been interested in comics since I was a kid."

When DAK called Kirk Groeneveld to ask him to interview Todd Reis about his extraordinary collection of Batman art, since Kirk and Todd lived relatively close to each other, he got lucky. For if DAK had called Kirk one day — or even several hours — later, he would have gotten one of those much beloved recorded messages that the phone company is so famous for. That was the day Kirk moved. He now lives very, very far away from Todd.

Kirk was good enough to take a few hours away from loading up, he delayed his departure and went over to meet Todd for a massive photo session and discussion of various pieces. Unfortunately, he couldn't really interview Todd thoroughly, they barely had time to take the pictures, but his background work and his observations were invaluable to me in conducting this interview. Someday I hope to visit Todd and view his collection personally, as Kirk did, because I know these marvelous photographs I've been drooling over can't really do it justice . . .

DARREL L. BOATZ: *Todd, what's your background as a collector?*

TODD REIS: Well, I've been interested in comics since I was a little kid. There was a point when I stopped collecting in high school, but I started again in college. Then I got involved in doing the three-dimensional shadowboxes based on comic-book covers. I've been doing that for fifteen years now and I've done a *lot* of trading with known artists — I would exchange a 3-D, something that I did, for an original drawing of something *they* did.

DARREL: *Why Batman?*

TODD REIS

TM & Batman © 1990 DC Comics, Inc.

"I buy 12 or 15 issues and take off the covers."

Here's a close-up of the PLAYBOY 3-D. Simply take an X-acto knife, a stack of PLAYBOY photos, Todd's imagination (and sense of design) and mix well with many hours of patience — a work of art.

TODD: I've always *liked* the character, but I'm not a fanatic about it. I look at it as a litmus test. I would always make my first request for their version of the Batman. The Batman is *so* interesting to draw that *most* artists enjoy getting the chance to do the character, even though they may not have done the character prior to my request. Once I've gotten a Batman piece, then I'll trade for other pieces. But I request Batman to see how each artist interprets that character. It also lends a certain *uniqueness* to my art collection.

I've also done 3-Ds for other collectors for money. But *trading* them allows me to acquire pieces of art that I normally would not have been able to afford. The art collection is something I *treasure.*

DARREL: *We talked with you back in COMICS INTERVIEW #41 about the 3-Ds — but could you explain again briefly what the 3-Ds are about?*

TODD: Basically, it goes back to the art of Japanese paper tolling. I buy about twelve or fifteen issues of the same comic and take off the covers — and yes, I do get rid of the comics, I give them away to people to read. Most of what I do are fairly recent issues, though there have been times when I've done back issues. Nevertheless, what I do is I take an X-acto knife and cut out the cover layer by layer. Then I mount it together, separating each layer with balsa wood; but instead of leaving just flat layers, I tend to curve and shape and bend to actually give form and shape to the figures.

And like I said, the average 3-D is between twelve and fifteen layers, which could be anywhere from three to six inches deep. There have been some that have been about *twenty* layers deep, due to the immense amount of detail. A few other people also do this. Some have *copied* me, others have developed it on their own, but *nobody* I know, in the

"I have a pencil piece from Mike Nasser."

fifteen years I've been doing it, does it to the depth and with the attention to detail that I do. I ran into a fellow, **Jeff Michalson**, who does the same type of thing with posters of magicians which were three or four layers deep. When he saw mine, he said if *he* were Luke Skywalker, *I* was Yoda. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *And you trade these 3-Ds for art?*

TODD: About half of what I do, I trade for art. I have other clients who pay for them. And I also don't *just* do comics art. I have done movie posters, prints, postcards, etc. I'm also involved in magic.

I'm a member of the Magic Castle, so I've been veering towards doing magic-oriented things. GAMES magazine recently had a cover photograph of magical props, so I'm going to be making a 3-D of that.

DARREL: *You are a collector of the art as well as of the books. How did you get into that?*

TODD: The situation came up *originally* with **Bill Stout**. He wanted a 3-D from me, but couldn't afford to buy it at the time, so we worked out a trade; the **Bill Stout** piece was the first in my collection. That was kind of neat. I really originally did not intend to build a collection, but I kind of . . .

DARREL: *You kind of fell into it?*

TODD: Yes. As it turned out, I got *hooked* on it, and I went around *purposely* contacting artists to work out trades. Back in 1978, I did a 3-D of THE SWAMP THING SAGA for **Berni Wrightson**. He gave me a Batman in the Thinker position with a smouldering volcano in the background, which I really treasure. And that is *definitely* something I could never afford to pay for, at least not at that time. I really did not *meet* him until two years ago at the San Diego Con. We worked out the trade by mail and telephone.

DARREL: *Getting into the art collecting side of it . . . what is it about comic-book art that makes it something you'd want to collect?*

TODD: It's not something that a lot of people *do* collect. **Dr. Ron Silverstein,** who I've done countless 3-Ds for, is the only person I know whose Batman collection exceeds mine. However, what attracts me, I don't know; I just *like* the art.

In doing the 3-Ds, I've learned to *appreciate* the work that goes into a piece of art. I wish I could draw that well. When I do a 3-D, I go through almost every line; I get to know the artist pretty well.

DARREL: *That sounds like what an inker might say about their work.*

TODD: Right, because they get these beautiful pencils to ink. So, the 3-D art has given me a deeper appreciation for the colnic art. It actualized my appreciation more.

DARREL: *For someone who might be thinking of starting their own collection of comic art, what can they expect? What's out there? What's going on? How does it work?*

TODD: Well, every year I go to the San Diego Con, and there are a few other smaller cons that I go to. San Diego is the big one. Numerous artists always show up there who are more than willing to do sketches for anywhere from $10 to $50, or more if you want to commission something to be done at their studios and have sent to you. Basically, conventions are good places to *meet* the artists and have them do quick sketches.

And there are also a few dealers who sell original art pages, which can go anywhere from $10 to $1,000 depending on the artist. *Howard Chaykin's* art is extremely expensive. **Todd McFarlane** has just *zoomed* up since he went over to Marvel to do SPIDER-MAN. One thing you can do is grab onto an artist that you like, someone early in his career, if you think this guy is going to go far. I have a pencil piece in my collection from **Mike Nasser,** who has more or less disappeared from the comics world now. I think he's in the Middle East studying religion. But his pencils are absolutely terrific.

Mike Nasser.

"I think Brian Bolland's KILLING JOKE cover would

Walt Simonson's now-classic The Batman vs. The Joker illustration.

As far as trading, I don't think enough people have the opportunity to trade with the artists like I do. If you can work out something, great. I give the artists something that they can't put into their art, the extra dimension of depth, no matter how well they can draw. I think **Brian Bolland's** KILLING JOKE cover would be a *great* 3-D. There's so much dimension in there already, the way he drew it, but there's still something else I can add to it.

Some artists are very cooperative, some artists aren't. Some artists just don't have the time to do sketches. If they say no, you've got to take it with a grain of salt, *especially* at a convention. Sometimes you can work out a deal where you can contact them later on, if you can get their number and address, *especially* if you want an elaborate piece that would best be done *away* from the convention. Some artists, especially if they're popular like **Frank Miller,** are usually just mobbed and don't have a lot of time to draw anything or care to draw anything at a con. You can also try reaching artists by writing to them care of their comic company.

DARREL: *Well, you got into collecting the art in the early- or mid-'70s, I take it?*

TODD: Correct.

DARREL: *Pop art was really big in the '60s, and then it kind of died off for awhile. In the time that you have been collecting, what kind of action in the field have you seen?*

TODD: Right now there's a lull; collecting original art is not quite as popular as it has been, but that comes and goes. Pop art during the '60s was mainly posters of Superman *a la* **Curt Swan** and **Murphy Anderson.** During the '70s, thanks to **Neal Adams,** the art becomes more dramatic and realistic. That alone caused a turnaround. Art now has become more . . .

DARREL: *Cartooney?*

TODD: Some of it has become cartooney, if you look at something like **Kyle Baker** did with THE SHADOW or with JUSTICE, INC. If you look at **Sienkiewicz's** stuff, it's more abstract. When you look at the stuff that was done in the BLACK ORCHID book, it's more surreal. There is a broader range of styles. The artists tend to be doing a better job for the most part. I really enjoy the fact that they are publishing books now in higher stock, better quality paper, to improve the reproduction of the art. On the other hand, I don't think the paper is *worth* it, when the artist really hasn't put as much into it as he could. Some publishers will print anything in deluxe format just to get more money if the subject is popular. I was extremely disappointed with THE PRISONER mini-series. The delays were inexcusable also. I would have preferred a better writer and artist on that series for the price they were selling it.

DARREL: *As you said, you get a lot of Batman art — just about all of the stuff we have photos of is The Batman. I wish I could come and look at it in person; I don't think these photos are doing it justice.*

TODD: No, plus you have no relative idea of the sizes of the various pieces. They range from 8" by 10", **Sergio Aragones'** little cartoon, to the **Brent Anderson** or **Walt Simonson** pieces, which are movie poster size.

There's an interesting story: That was drawn by Walt for my collection, and before he mailed it to me, he showed it to **Len Wein** who was Batman editor at the time. He had to have it for a cover, so he had **Doug Moench** write and **Don Newton** draw a story, based on the Batman and Joker fighting atop this tower. It wasn't *quite* the same, I believe they used an Aztec or Inca tower in that particular story; but nevertheless, it was based upon this piece which then became

be a great 3-D. There's so much dimension in there."

the cover of BATMAN #366.

DARREL: *Let's talk a little about what makes particular pieces valuable. Of course, the artist is going to be one factor, and the subject would be another factor, I suppose —*

TODD: Well, it doesn't have to be valuable if there's something that you *like*. There are a number of pieces that I have that were done by amateurs, but I really enjoy them.

But the predominant thing that makes a piece valuable is going to be the artist, his popularity and/or his availability to *doing* original art. To my knowledge, **Weighson** rarely ever does anything outside of his publication work, which makes the piece I have something quite special. And if you go to any convention, you will not find **John Byrne** drawing or autographing hardly anything at all.

If you're looking at it from an investment standpoint, that's fine — but personally, if I see something I like, professional or amateur, that's what I want. I look at my collection as a whole, I would not break it up. The main thing, especially if you're going to have it up on your wall and you're going to be looking at it all of the time, it should be something that you enjoy looking at. It doesn't matter how valuable it is.

DARREL: *In other words, you're not looking for investment potential as much as you are looking for the aesthetic value, how it feels to you?*

TODD: Right. There are a lot of people investing in original art, as they are investing in comics. If you want to make an investment, go with a popular artist.

DARREL: *Well, let's go through some of these pieces here. I'd like to, I don't know, get what you feel about each piece; why it's important to you.*

TODD: There are some underlying stories with some of them.

DARREL: *We might as well start with the Bill Stout piece, which DAK used as the cover for COMICS INTERVIEW #74.*

TODD: Yes. That was, as I said before, the original piece I traded for. It's done in airbrush, a very simplistic Batman similar to what **Bob Kane** may have done. A very nice coloring job.

DARREL: *The next piece we have here is in black and white, I believe, by Rick Hoberg, Batman punching out the Joker.*

TODD: Right. **Rick Hoberg** I've known for several years, he used to live down here. This was done back in 1978. He was doing covers for the STAR WARS tabloid from Marvel at the time. I did a 3-D of that and asked for a Batman in

Rick Hoberg.

Terry Austin.

"Batman's popularity zoomed since DARK KNIGHT."

exchange:

DARREL: *It's a neat piece with the two images of Batman. I really like the way I like the "stacked" visual image better than the foreground image. (Laughter.) It's such a nice piece. Moving along, we've got Terry Austin, Batman leaping after the Penguin.*

Brent Anderson.

TODD: This was colored and used on the back of an issue of THE COMIC READER that old defunct comics fan magazine — but I have the original in black-and-white. I think Terry drew it for me, but also sent it to TCR because he owed them something. I'm not sure of the issue, wait a minute. *(A few moments later.)* Okay, July 1980, #181, if anybody collects that magazine. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Three things about this piece strike me —*

TODD: Before you tell me, I would say that I felt it was very heavily influenced by **Marshall Rogers.**

DARREL: *That's very obvious, in the Batman especially. And his shadow falling onto the building like a giant bat symbol, that is really neat. I really like this version of the Penguin. And the tapers on Batman's gauntlets, they're almost like Wolverine's claws.*

TODD: Yes.

DARREL: *It's a neat effect.*

TODD: I've always liked the amount of detail that Terry put into his inking during that period. Now he's gotten more sketchy, doesn't embellish quite as much as he used to.

DARREL: *The next one is by Joe Staton, Huntress standing in front of Bruce Wayne's grave, with a big Batman in the background.*

TODD: That obviously was based on the *original* Huntress, the daughter of Bruce Wayne and Catwoman. This was done shortly after she was created, a water-color wash done in gray and white.

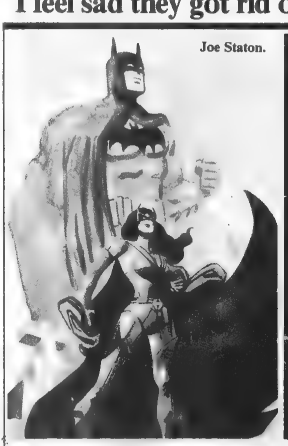
DARREL: *Has what they've done now with the Huntress changed your feelings for this piece in any way?*

TODD: Well, it gives me a strange feeling. I liked the older costume better, the original costume. I look at the new Huntress, even though she has the same name, and similar costume, as a different character — well, she *is* a different character. They've pretty much broken all ties with the old one. So, I do feel sad that they did get rid of the original Huntress. But I understand why they did it, because they were redoing the DC Universe and the Huntress was an inconsistency, it didn't fit in. I can't really blame them.

DARREL: *Now, this next one just blows me away — Brent Anderson.*

TODD: He was doing KA-ZAR at the time that he did this. I did a 3-D for him, and he reciprocated by doing a poster-sized piece for me. It's done on *green* paper with chalk pastels, and it's Batman crouched on a chimney with the wind or fog swirling around, the full moon in the

"I feel sad they got rid of the original Huntress."



background, and the cape billowing out to the side.

DARREL: *And it's a really humongous cape.* (Laughter.) *Of course, he's crouching, it's hard to tell, but it seems like an incredible amount of cape.*

TODD: This was done in '82. I heard on the TV that Batman's popularity has zoomed up ever since DARK KNIGHT RETURNS, and somebody had credited **Frank Miller** with the return of the dark avenger. But if you look at this collection, and if you really look back on a *majority* of the stories, you can see how it was really **Denny O'Neil** who should be credited, and **Neal Adams.** A lot of these were done prior to DARK KNIGHT RETURNS and are very moody.

DARREL: *The next piece we have is the Scott Shaw BATDUCK cover.*

TODD: I've known Scott a long time, and this is *prior* to him doing CAPTAIN CARROT. This is a takeoff on an old '40s BATMAN cover where Batman was introducing Robin. It's humorous, we have Batduck and Robin the Bird Wonder and the Porker, the Joker with sort of a pig face. I think he eventually did use the Porker somewhere in the CAPTAIN CARROT series, but this was definitely done a long time prior to that. And it's sort of neat because he signed his name *a la* **Bob Kane** with the big "O."

DARREL: *Moving on, we've got Don Newton. This one may not reproduce well because it's so dark, Batman could pretty much vanish.*

TODD: But the Joker face is what *makes* this one, in my opinion. The Batman is a nice pose, but he painted him too blue.

DARREL: *Yes. It almost looks like one of those carved models, the Batman. The Joker face is incredible, though.*

TODD: Yes, I just can't talk enough about the Joker, it's such a very *menacing* face. And I can see what you say about the Batman, it looks almost like a figurine of some sort. It's unfortunate that Don passed away.

DARREL: *Now, one thing I had wondered about is if the Batman is the main focus of your collection, the other characters who appear with him in various pieces, do they increase your appreciation for any of these pieces?*

TODD: It adds variety to the collection. Instead of it being too monotonous, just having the Batman, having the Penguin and Talia and the Huntress breaks up the monotony and makes it a little bit more interesting — especially if the artist had a hand in doing something with the other character. In the case of the Huntress, **Joe Staton** had a hand in creating that character, so that really does add something to the piece, at least for me.

DARREL: *Going back to that one, I really liked it a lot, but I think it would have been nice if the Catwoman had been in it as well, since the Huntress was the daughter of both.*

TODD: That's true.

DARREL: *But let's not get nitpicky.* (Laughter.) *The next one is the famous Berni Wrightson Batman in the Thinker position. This one is just beautiful.*

TODD: Yes, it is. At the time, they were reprinting the SWAMP THING series in their dollar comics, and I did a 3-D from one of the covers. He apparently was so blown away by all the layers — that one was 20 layers deep — that he took a flashlight and inspected the whole piece layer by layer. And he reciprocated by doing this *beautiful* piece. The leg does look very strange, though, almost monstrous. But I *really* like the way his cape drapes over his shoulder, the texture to the cape. It's Batman in the Thinker position in a sort of cavelike atmosphere, but yet there's a sky in the background and a smoldering volcano. I guess it's symbolic of the violence that's within him

"Wrightson inspected the whole piece layer by layer."

Marshall Rogers.

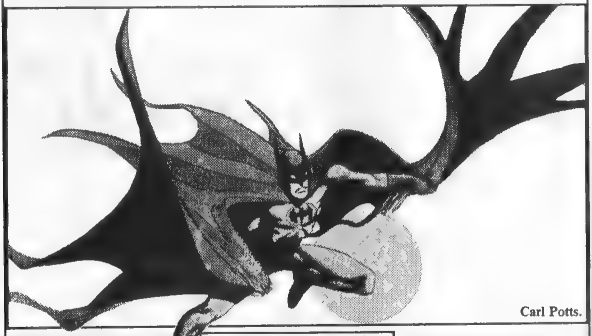
which can erupt at any moment.

DARREL: *It is a very evocative piece.*

TODD: It is another piece which I have gotten several offers for, but I will never get rid of it. Someday I hope to get a Joker from **Berni Wrightson;** he does owe me a piece. I did another 3-D for him and I have yet to finish the deal with him on that.

DARREL: *Next we have Carl Potts.*

TODD: Carl was at the time always showing up at the San Diego Con trying to get work. This was before he became an editor at Marvel, and he had just started to do several books. I always had



Carl Potts.

"I lived not too far from Jack Kirby."

been after him to do a sketch, so finally he came up with that particular piece of Batman runnung with the cape flying every which way. I really like it, it's one of *my* favorites.

DARREL: *It is interesting, you don't often see the cape done this way. It's a neat effect, just scattered out all over the place.*

TODD: Yes. That one I bought from Carl. I never worked out a trade with him because he hasn't done that many covers.

DARREL: *Next we have Marshall Rogers.*

TODD: It took me awhile to collect on this one. I had done a 3-D when he was doing DETECTIVE, the issue with the Penguin on the cover. Because he was always so busy and I couldn't really track him down, until I caught him at the San Diego Con and he did this for me. It was done in very light pencils which he then inked with a marker. It took him about ten minutes.

DARREL: *Ten minutes!*

TODD: Ten, fifteen maybe, not very long at all.

DARREL: *That's amazing.*

TODD: It's a fairly small piece, about 8" by 10".

DARREL: *Well, the thing that struck me here was the way the cape kind of swoops over Batman's right shoulder. I stared at this for some time trying to figure out just how that would be possible, because there must be some way that it can happen.*

TODD: He's swinging on the batrope, leaning forward with his feet out behind him, so if he's swinging forward then it would be blowing in back of him. But it doesn't go back, it goes sort of forward But it is, from a stylistic point of view, very interesting.

DARREL: *Oh, yes, and it's a neat effect. And it should be said that comic art doesn't all have to conform to the laws of physics, 'cause most of it doesn't anyway*

TODD: Right.

DARREL: *Next we have a nice curiosity by Jack Kirby.*

TODD: Yep, Batman fighting Captain America. I had lived out in Thousand Oaks for a number of years, not too far from where Jack lives, and I was always seeing him around the mall where I worked at the time. I did a 3-D of the cover of the 2001 tabloid that he did, and he gave me this in return. As you can see, it's an *excellent* Captain America, which is to be expected from **Kirby.** The Batman looks a little awkward, but nevertheless it's a **Jack Kirby,** which makes it, as you said, a curiosity.

Berni Wrightson

DARREL: *And as far as the Batman goes, it really does remind me of Miller's DARK KNIGHT in the sense of the style.*

TODD: Hmm I've never drawn that parallel, but to each his own. The hulking type figure?

DARREL: *Right, yeah. I like it, al-*

"Byrne says it's like money in the bank."

though I don't think he did the cape very well.

TODD: No, it's more of a Thor cape, I think, with a number of small, little, mildly arched points. If he did maybe *half* the number of points, make it a little more billowy instead of turning down but it's still a nice **Jack Kirby** piece. And he's a wonderful man, the very salt of the earth. If you ever get the chance to meet him, do so. He's one of the nicest people on this planet.

DARREL: *Moving on, next we have two pieces we might as well talk about togeiher, by Ken Steacy. One is Batman on a flagpole, one is Joker holding a chainsaw.*

TODD: Yes. The Batman piece came first. I had done a 3-D of an Iron Man cover from MARVEL FANFARE for Ken. Then two years later he said that he wanted another 3-D, so I said I'd like a piece on the Joker, so he made a companion piece. It's a *little* smaller, but they still go together quite well. I haven't gotten around to framing them yet. I don't know why. They're so beautiful. I can't decide how I want to frame them. *(Laughter.)* They were done in airbrush, very much like his work from MARVEL FANFARE

DARREL: *They're very uniquely stylized pieces, too. I can't recall ever seeing anything quite like this Batman before.*

TODD: That was done about the same time as the **Simonson** piece, and when **Steacy** heard about *that* being used for a cover, I think he showed DC a slide of that Batman in hopes that they might want that for a cover. But nothing ever came of that.

DARREL: *That's a shame, it would have been a very different cover if nothing else.*

TODD: Yes.

DARREL: *Next we have a very interesting dark, moody piece by John Byrne, Batman standing on top of the building with the eagles.*

TODD: Yes. There are a number of pieces which have this eagle, or some type of gargoyle or whatever. When Kirk was here, he kept noticing that the eagle was a recurring theme on a number of them, that it seems to turn up quite often. I don't know if it's an established place in Gotham City or what, where it comes from. Nevertheless, this is an oil painting done by **John Byrne.** I've done eight or nine 3-Ds for John, and this was one of the first things I got *from* him. The cape looks a little awkward, I'm not really quite happy with the way he did the cape, but the stance is typical, I think, of **Byrne.**

DARREL: *Well, the cape, it almost looks like it's melting, like it's made of wax and a flame has been taken to the edges.*

TODD: Yes. And it's done with the *black* cape as opposed to the blue colored cape.

DARREL: *Well, it's the old Batman, the '40s Batman, which you can tell from the chest symbol, of course.*

TODD: Right

DARREL: *A very nice piece. You've done a number of 3-Ds for John Byrne, is he one of your major contributors?*

TODD: Usually for each 3-D I do for him, he allows me to have three of his original covers for my collection. It's a very nice and lucrative trade, I think. And currently he owes me about six covers. *(Laughter.)* I believe he just hasn't had the time to sort through all of his covers. He gets stuff back by the ton, and being as busy as he is, he just stores them

Jack Kirby.

TODD REIS

Ken Steacy.

John Byrne.

"As an art teacher friend of mine said, less is more."

Bill Sienkiewicz.

away and doesn't have the time to just down and decide which ones to send me. But he says it's like money in the bank and as soon as he gets around to looking through what he has, he will.

DARREL: *Next up we have a very interesting pre-expressionist Bill Sienkiewicz piece.*

TODD: This was just about the time he stopped doing MOON KNIGHT and before he went into the, like you said, expressionism or abstract trend. This *almost* looks like a photograph from far away — the further away you get, the better it looks. It almost looks like . . . at the time I would have said **Adam West** in the Batman costume. It was done in chalk pastels, and I've gotten a *lot* of offers for

DARREL: *I can well imagine. Have you gotten more offers as he's gotten more popular?*

TODD: No. A lot of people just don't see my collection, not that many people

"Someone credited Miller with returning the dark avenger."

know of what I have.

DARREL: *Next — I'm trying to get through as many of these as we can while we still have tape — next we have a George Perez Batman, very obviously CRISIS related.*

TODD: Right. It's sort of a fisheye look at the city with Batman swinging towards you. He colored it *interestingly*. Personally, I think it might have been better left in black and white.

DARREL: *Well, but the red sky makes it obviously a CRISIS piece. I don't mean to pry about how you felt about the CRISIS or anything, you already commented on that about the Huntress —*

TODD: I felt it needed to be done. I mean, I can really sympathize with the way things were going with the stories upon stories and the revisions upon revisions, and times change.

DARREL: *I was wondering how your feelings for the CRISIS affected your feelings for this piece?*

TODD: It doesn't faze it, to me it's just a **George Perez** piece. In fact, I don't think I've ever thought about it being CRISIS related myself. You say "red sky," the same could be said of the piece **Giordano** did.

DARREL: *Well, it's red sky with lightning and by George Perez.*

TODD: Actually, it's more of a dark purple sky.

DARREL: *Next we have a piece — I think you will be able to tell everybody about this one — by Jerry Ordway.*

TODD: Yeah. Berry's a hell of a nice fellow and at one time he and **Roy Thomas** created Obsidian for INFINITY, INC. I thought it would be natural for him to draw Batman along with Obsidian for me, not because of the fact that both are blue and gray and black, their costume colors, but because Obsidian is Todd Rice. He was born and raised in Milwaukee, as was I — it's sort of an in-joke between **Roy Thomas** and myself.

DARREL: *And the only thing you haven't mentioned is that again we have this eagle gargoyle.*

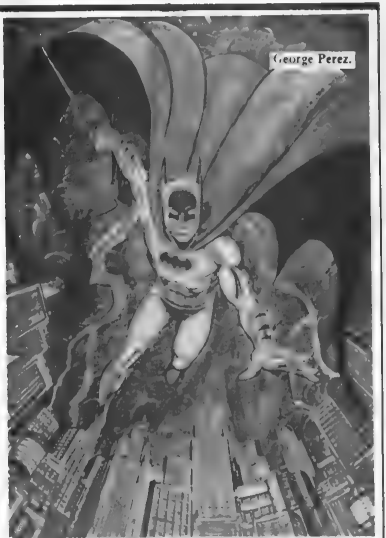
TODD: Right. It's on the **Byrne** piece, it's on that piece, it just shows up every so often.

DARREL: *And on this one Batman's cape spreads out in an interesting effect.*

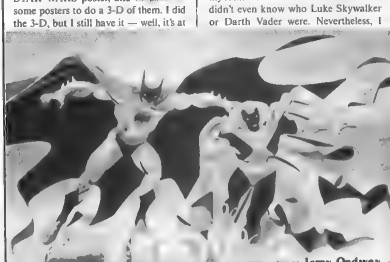
TODD: And it's a *terrific* coloring job he did, also.

DARREL: *Next, Howard Chaykin. It looks like a pretty quick sketch.*

TODD: That's *exactly* what it was, a *very* quick sketch. Oddly enough, back in 1977 he was doing the STAR WARS comic book, and he had a pre-publicity



STAR WARS poster, and he gave me some posters to do a 3-D of them. I did the 3-D, but I still have it — well, it's at my folks' house. At the time that I did it, I didn't even know who Luke Skywalker or Darth Vader were. Nevertheless, I



Howard Chaykin.

Murphy Anderson.

Jerry Bingham.

"I did a 3-D of DETECTIVE #457 — the Batman head."

Sergio Aragones.

showed it to him the following year and it was just too big for him to take back to New York, so he allowed me to *keep* the 3-D on top of giving me a page from one of his DOMINICK FORTUNE stories; and, of course, when I asked him to do the Batman, he gave me that quick sketch.

DARREL: *Next we have Murphy Anderson, Batman running with a smile on his face, another stock type of shot.*

TODD: It's a stock type of shot, pretty much what he might have done when he was doing JUSTICE LEAGUE over **Sekowsky.** He's an artist that I grew up reading in the '60s, and I've long admired his fine ink style. Again, it's a very simple piece, but I treasure it because it's **Murphy Anderson.**

DARREL: *And it's very nice — sometimes simple is better.*

TODD: Right. As an art teacher friend of mine once said, less is more. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Okay. Next, a very interesting piece by Mike Zeck. Batman standing atop a building. It's like he's standing guard.*

TODD: Yes. I think I did a PUNISHER 3-D for him . . . no, it was Captain America versus the Destroyer, I think. Anyway, he reciprocated by doing this piece, and this was long before he did the NIGHTS OF THE BEAST covers. It's a very *proud* Batman looking out over Gotham City.

DARREL: *This next one is the guy you don't want to meet in a dark alley. This is Batman with his fists clenched, teeth gritted, very angry looking, by Jerry Bingham.*

TODD: Right. Again, a fairly quick sketch, one I bought from Jerry. I haven't been able to work out a trade, but he admires my work and my magic — I was doing magic this year for him at the San Diego con. I loved what he did in the graphic novel he did with **Mike Barr.** I *had* to have something by him in my collection.

DARREL: *Next, a very funny curiosity by Sergio Aragones.*

TODD: I have done a number of 3-Ds for Sergio for cash, and this is a little cartoon he did for me because I had been after him to do Batman for my collection. A hell of a nice guy, very charismatic. I think he might have drawn this once before for MAD when they were doing spoofs of superheroes.

Michael Zeck.

"Obsidian is Todd Rice. He was born and raised

DARREL: *I really like this next one, it has a nice feeling of depth, by Bruce Patterson — and again, Batman's gonna kick you in the face.*

TODD: Right, coming down right on top of you. Somebody once complained, "What's Batman doing with shoes on?" He thought he wore spandex all around. (Laughter.)

DARREL: *Well, you live in a cave —* (Laughter.)

TODD: Nevertheless, this is a *very* nice piece. He's known predominantly as an inker in the business, and this is when he was working at First Comics. He's also a hell of a nice guy. I like the way he did the lighting effect like the light is shining *up* on Batman as he's coming down.

DARREL: *It really gives a nice feeling of depth to this piece. Plus there's a sense of motion as well, he put in a few motion lines.*

TODD: Yes.

DARREL: *This next one I really like but I don't know how well it will reproduce, by Mike Sekowsky.*

TODD: It's a very *strange* piece. I had met Mike a couple of times, but had never worked out a deal with him, and at the time he was working at Hanna-Barbera with **Scott Shaw.** So the deal was I did another 3-D for **Scott Shaw** and he got me an original **Sekowsky** piece. Now, it's very awkward, very menacing, very strange, with a lot of broken TV antennas all over the roof that he's jumping over, running over — which, when you think about it, with all of the TV antennas on roofs, would be natural. Again, he's someone that I admired from my childhood, when I was reading JUSTICE LEAGUE during my formative years. It may not be an *exceptional* piece, but it's a piece I treasure. It's a shame he passed away.

DARREL: *Yes. I grew up on his JUSTICE LEAGUEs too, which I really loved. The odd thing here is the expression, it looks like Batman has been possessed or something.*

TODD: Yes, it's a very *evil* looking face.

DARREL: *And next we have the WORLD'S FINEST team by Curt Swan.*

TODD: Again, one of the classics that I grew up with, I've always loved **Curt Swan's** art. And again, an *extremely* wonderful person. I went and visited him at his apartment up in Connecticut a couple of years ago. I did a WORLD'S FINEST 3-D for him, and of course I wanted a Batman, but I couldn't ask him for something without Superman as well. It's a very nice pencil piece. **Joe Rubinstein** was after me to let him ink this, but I just felt it would be a sin to ink over pencils that are this beautiful.

DARREL: *Yes. The thing that's kind of strange to me is Batman appears larger than Superman. Maybe it's the perspective, because their heads seem on the same level but Batman is swinging with his body forward and Superman is flying with his body back — but Batman does seem to take up more space.*

TODD: I didn't notice that, but Batman was the prime thing to me for my collection. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce Patterson.

Mike Sekowsky.

in Milwaukee, as was I [illegible] an in-jo[illegible]."

DARREL: *Well, I don't think it's a detraction, I just find it interesting.*

TODD: Right.

DARREL: *Next we have Nestor Redondo.*

TODD: Again, this took me about a year to collect. I had done a 3-D for him using color Xeroxes of an interior page of . . . RIMA? I can't remember the book. But it was some type of jungle scene. And he reciprocated by doing this, Batman and Robin charging forward. A very nice piece and a very nice man.

DARREL: *This next piece by Dan Jurgens is really fascinating, with the nice reflecting buildings.*

TODD: Yes. It's not so much the Batman as it is the buildings, because Batman is a relatively small figure. Is there an eagle on that building? *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *I can't see one.*

TODD: The nice thing, as you said, is the buildings, the reflection of one building in the mirrorlike windows of another building. Dan put a lot of thought into the perspective on that. And I like the other touches, like you can see someone looking out a window at the bottom right. And if anybody knows Minneapolis, this is based on a Minneapolis skyline.

Curt Swan.

Nestor Redondo.

"As far as the cape goes — the original Bob Kane

DARREL: *Next we have the Dick Giordano piece. This one looks like Batman is gonna kick you in the face.*

TODD: Right, like he's swinging down right on top of you. I had done one or two 3-Ds for Dick . . . actually, I did a 3-D of DETECTIVE #457, the one he did where it's a shot of Batman's head and you see into his head to Crime Alley. I did that 3-D a second time for myself because I liked it so much. This piece took me two years to get because he wanted to take his time and color it. He's so busy that he didn't have a lot of time to spare. But he was doing something he rarely got the chance to do, had a lot of fun doing it.

An interesting thing about this is a few years after he did this, or within a year, he came out with a book on how to draw comics. I don't know if anybody's seen that, but he had a number of generic characters on the cover. There's one that is this *exact* pose down to the muscles, but it's not Batman. It's the character in a different costume, because he couldn't use established characters. This was just before he became VP at DC.

DARREL: *This next one looks like it could have come straight out of BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS, by Jim Aparo.*

TODD: Right, a longtime favorite of mine. I really liked the work he did on the early SPECTRE series and in DETECTIVE for awhile. He's also a *wonderful* guy, and very generous. At one time I did a collage for him, a 3-D of various characters that he did, the Phantom Stranger, Aquaman, Batman. I did one or two other pieces and I've stayed at his house twice, so that's a very special piece to me. I really admire his work, and I've always felt he was very underrated.

Mike Grell.

DARREL: *Next we have Mike Grell, Batman running.*

TODD: I've done a number of 3-Ds for Mike, also. That was the first piece I traded him for. I've also received original covers from him, and a Warlord piece that he did for me. This is just a very simple piece of Batman running. He did that at about the same time that he was working on the four issues of BATMAN.

DARREL: *And next we have a very nice Batman portrait by Joe Kubert.*

TODD: Right, another quick sketch. I had done a RAGMAN 3-D for him — I met him at the San Diego Con and I also interviewed him for a newsletter for a comics store I frequented. Again he's somebody I grew up with and I admire his style. I wish he could have done more, but I'm satisfied with this.

It's interesting in that sometimes artists, depending on their egos I guess, have done things basing on time; like, I put in a lot of effort on the 3-D I did for **Wrightson,** and **Wrightson** put in a lot of effort on the piece he did for me. On the

Jim Aparo.

Batman — it was not so much a cape as a wing."

Joe Kubert.

Dick Giordano.

On Bob Kane's piece: "This was done back in '78."

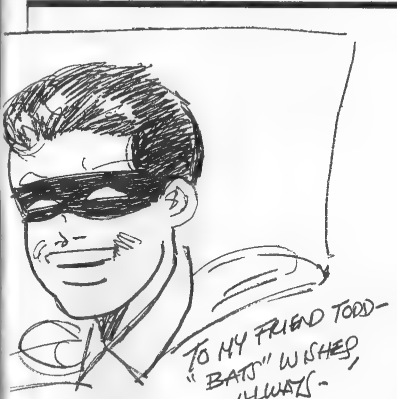
other hand, some artists have reciprocated in value; where my 3-D would be *x* amount of dollars, they'll give me something worth *x* amount of dollars. So, it can go either way. Sometimes it's worked out for the better; sometimes it's worked out so-so. *(Laughter.)*

DARREL: *Next we have the eagle showing up again in a piece by Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez.*

TODD: Right, a classic pose originally from UNTOLD LEGEND OF THE BATMAN with him just swinging straight forward; it was reprinted on the

Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez.

"I've made off quite well with this collection."



Bob Kane.

DC calendar last year and also redone on a few T-shirts I've seen around. *(Laughter.)* But nevertheless, it's a classic pose, I asked him *specifically* for that pose because I had done a 3-D of that cover for him. It's a marvelous, wonderful piece.

DARREL: *This next piece your collection would not be complete without, a Bob Kane.*

TODD: Yes. This was done back in '78. He was at the San Diego Con and I managed to corner him up in his room, spent about a half-hour with him. At the time I had done a 3-D of the DETECTIVE #27 cover from that giant tabloid reprint of it. He took it back to New York, but I heard it got damaged. I offered to fix it, but I never heard back from him. Now he's living out here somewhere, but I've never really connected up with him. Bob, if you're reading this, get in touch.

DARREL: *Well, I understand he's been pretty busy this year.*

TODD: Yeah, right. *(Laughter.)* But nevertheless, this is basically a quick sketch, simple head shots of Batman and Robin. But the interesting thing is that I was at an art gallery last weekend and saw his originals for sale. There were several colored pieces that were going from between $5,000 to $8,000. Now granted, Batman is currently *hot*, and also a mail gallery has a certain markup that they have to tack on, but I had thought this picture I have was only worth $100 to $200. Now I would have to say it would be worth a lot more than that. And you're right, it does make the collection complete, although I wish I had an original by Jerry Robinson as well.

DARREL: *What enjoyment is it that you get out of collecting all of this Batman art?*

TODD: It makes *my* art that much more special to me. Seeing the art and knowing that *my* art made it possible for me to collect all of this, and made it possible for me to meet most of these people whose names I've seen in the comic books, whose art has blown me away — and deal with them on a one to one level. It's not just seeing the art and enjoying it, which I do, but it also brings back memories. It's *more* than just an art collection.

DARREL: *It's kind of like a piece of you, or you become a piece of it or something.*

TODD: Right.

DARREL: *Well, I guess that's about it unless there's anything else you can think of?*

TODD: If anybody is interested in contacting me about my 3-D art, especially any artists that would like to work out any trade, I would be more than happy to hear from you. And since I now have practically all of the pieces documented on slides, if a club would want to see a slide show and I'm in the area, I'd be more than happy to give a presentation and talk about the collection and my 3-D art.

My artwork I do because I enjoy it. It's like doing a jigsaw puzzle, and I'll always continue to do 3-D work. I've made off quite well with this collection. And if I were ever to *sell* this collection now would be the time to strike with the big Batman craze — and sell it as a whole — but I have no intention of doing so. On one hand, I wish more people could see it, but in a way I rather like hoarding it. *(Laughter.)*

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

U BITTER VICTORY

DAKola:

Here are my comments on issue #73: BEAUTY AND THE BEAST interview (**Wendy Pini**): As a fan of the show, I found this interview of particular interest, but was disappointed you didn't use it as an excuse to run a photo of **Wendy Pini** in her Red Sonja costume.

Didn't I teach you *anything*? But the interview was pleasant reading, mainly because Ms. P. has always impressed me as being pleasant, likeable and interesting, besides being one fabulous babe. It was good to learn she actually feels *simpatico* with the show and has tried to capture the spirit of the show, instead of just cranking out some fast-buck "product." I also was pleasantly surprised to see she is a versatile artist: I liked her ELFQUEST work very much and her new B&B work is very different, yet very effective. I wonder what her reaction was to the news that the B&B TV writers were going to kill off Catherine by having thugs torture her to death. It's like they handed over the show to **Steve Gerber.**

William Messner-Loebs: The best interview in the issue. Although I've always had my doubts about him — what's with this hyphenated last-name business, anyway? — JOURNEY is one of the best comics I've ever read, and so it was pleasant to learn that its creator is also an interesting conversationalist.

As for issue #74:

UP FRONT (Editorial): Well-written, though it seemed a bit odd given your format. So **Jack Nicholson** is now "a culture hero" and "the model for other people to aspire to"? God help us.

Marv Wolfman: Okay interview but more inside poop on current comics than I, personally, am interested in.

Matt Groening: He's a liberal. Liberals suck. 'Nuff said?

William Stout: Probably it's just me and where my interests lie (lay?) but I found myself skimming most of this one; however, it's always nice to find oneself, no matter the circumstances. Liked his artwork, though.

Steve Sibra: Pretty good. I'm glad I'm not the only one who wondered how the Joker's goons got to the top of the cathedral after the Joker destroyed apparently the one means of getting to the bell tower.

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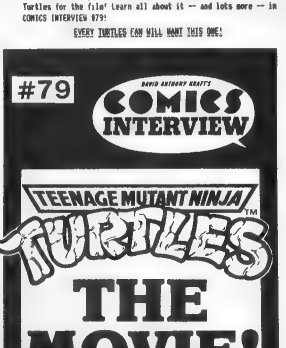

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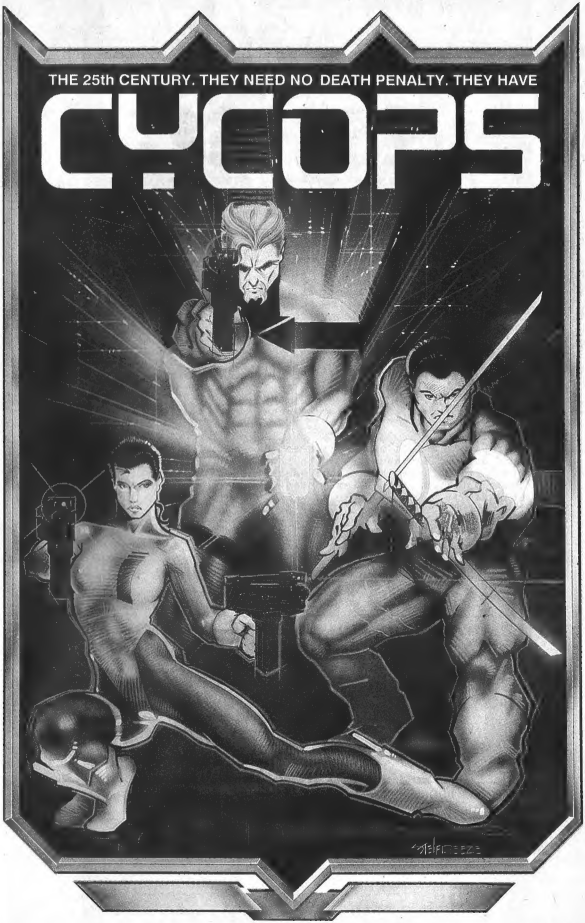
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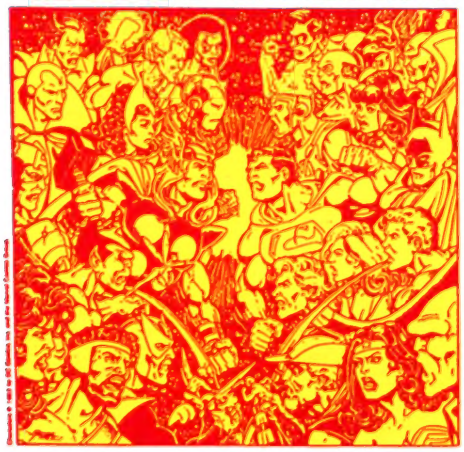

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